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The Edge of Obscurity:
Affect, Precarity, and Culture in Rural Japan

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The Edge of Obscurity:
Affect, Precarity, and Culture in Rural Japan

by

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Dedication

To my parents,

who have always supported me unconditionally.

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Abstract

The Edge of Obscurity:
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Japan has recently faced the threat of cultural continuity, a result of factors ranging from demographic issues to economics ones. A variety of methods have been employed to combat some of the negative economic effects and the potential disappearance of cultural heritage and tradition, especially in rural areas. Some of these methods include attracting domestic tourism through various media, encouraging young, urban individuals to move to rural towns and villages, and increased international recognition through the designation of important cultural heritage using organizations like UNESCO. However, underlying these ostensibly optimistic endeavors run intense feelings of anxiety, uncertainty, and hopelessness, feelings often associated with a sense of precarity. This paper argues that while such attempts at revitalization and recognition do have positive effects, they often come with significant downsides. The laws and policies forming the framework of UNESCO's “intangible cultural heritage” designation come from colonialist policies that continue to shape understanding of “cultural heritage” through the designation system and its governing body. In many ways, the system also implicitly encourages Orientalism among consumers of non-Western cultural heritage,

some of which may be the result of intentional exoticism and essentialism on the part of the designation-seeking entities. These practices, inherited from colonial governments and bureaucracies, work in conjunction with preexisting conceptions of "heritage" and "tradition," often linking them to rural, implicitly pre-modern areas and peoples, which perpetuates modernist lines of thought about successful designees. Abstractions of the rural from real places and objects significantly contributes to the feelings of a "vanishing" experienced by nations like Japan, but especially in declining rural areas. This, in turn, leads to further feelings of precarity, and this narrative of precariousness becomes embedded in national consciousness and discourse through media exposure. While attention needs to be paid to the potential instability of cultural heritage and precarity, the ways in which people approach these things warrant serious reconsideration.

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Introduction

As I stood surrounded by cold, ash, and people, I got the sense that the small festival I observed, *Hanamatsuri,* aroused deep feelings of joy and togetherness for the gathered participants and observers. The performances filled the air with smoke from a bonfire, the reverberations of taiko drums and the piercing, shrill voice of Japanese flutes. It filled the people with mirth, their cups with alcohol, and the space with excitement. But underneath the revelry and celebration, something tempered these feelings of joy. From my conversations with friends and local citizens, I knew that everyone saw a dim future for the festival. Despite the promise of age-old continuity and the continued benefits of increased traffic brought by the festival, their lingered a pervasive sense of cultural vanishing, of tradition in peril.

This paper examines the potentially damaging relationship between rural areas, cultural heritage, and international organizations like UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), viewed through lenses of precarity and affect. Through various media, individuals, and discourse, I argue that conceptions of heritage, tradition, and the past commonly linked to "the rural" have become increasingly disconnected from actual places and things in Japan, in favor of general points of reference such as mountains and forests. Through essentialization taking place on a variety of levels, this abstraction of "the rural" points to underlying issues in both the designation and understanding of "intangible cultural heritage" in particular. I argue these

issues arise partially from policies and laws with colonialist and Orientalist structures inherited from paternalistic practices put in place by colonial authorities, ostensibly to protect local sites and objects from their own people. “Intangible cultural heritage” exists with these structures in place beneath it, which, combined with the essentialist view of both cultural heritage and rural areas, creates a deep sense of precarity over the potential “vanishing” and loss of heritage, a sensation with great potential for circulation as affect.

Since 2008, “intangible cultural heritage” (ICH) has been internationally designated and curated by UNESCO in its mission to identify and preserve important traditions around the world. In this paper, I examine the role of ICH in Japan, applying it to the example of *Hanamatsuri* in the rural mountain village of Tōei in Aichi Prefecture. I also explore the relationship between nationalism, affect, precarity, and cultural heritage in Japan by examining both the UNESCO designations of “World Heritage Site” and “intangible cultural heritage,” as well as Japan's own “important intangible cultural property.” Also discussed is the idea of “re-Orientalism,” a type of self-orientalization, as a strategy employed by some nations and people to appeal to entrenched “Western” conceptions of “Oriental” spaces and peoples internationally for increased visibility. (Lau and Dwivedi, 2014) This paper builds on the work of scholarship concerning the construction of “tradition” in Japan as a component of modernity, current work on affect and precarity, critical heritage studies, and work on rural Japan.

In recent years, the Japanese nation has faced the looming specter of decline and irrelevance as countries like South Korea, India, China, and Taiwan have taken over

industries and economic levels Japan previously held. Similarly, demographic issues have led to a steady decline in population and birthrate, and in recent decades have come to be seen as a major societal problem. With the number of retired and elderly people ballooning, all areas of Japanese economy and industry face serious issues as fewer and fewer individuals exist to support the greying population. (D. M. "The incredible shrinking country," 2014) Though the Japanese youth feel concerned about these issues, an increasing number also feel that they should not bear the burden of these problems, and express exasperation at the pressure exerted upon them. (Personal interviews, 2015) As a result, older Japanese people feel the Japanese youth have become too selfish, lax in their responsibilities as Japanese citizens, a feeling compounded by the decision of many young Japanese to remain single and forgo child-bearing. (Ibid)

In addition to the economic, societal, and industrial concerns raised by these demographic issues and exacerbated by Japan's diminished international relevance, Japanese culture, heritage, and tradition faces a crisis of continuity and preservation. With falling birth rates and an aging population, there are fewer people to receive and observe the various pieces of Japanese culture in both the cities and the countryside.

This "cultural crisis" has brought its own set of fears and anxieties. Despite wider recognition of various aspects of Japanese culture by organizations like UNESCO, such as *washoku* ("tradition dietary cultures of the Japanese," according to the UNESCO ICH list) and rituals and performances like *Kumiodori* (traditional Okinawan dancing) and *Mibu no Hana Taue* (ritualized rice planting in Hiroshima) (UNESCO website, 2015), the

options for maintaining and continuing such practices grow scarce, especially in more economically and demographically vulnerable rural villages and towns. *Hanamatsuri* is one of these vulnerable traditions.

"Hanamatsuri" is a collection of folk Shinto ceremonies and festivals, taking place annually from October to February, originating in the area around Tōei, Aichi Prefecture. Around 15 different events take place in the nearby villages and towns, each dedicated to a different *oni* benefactor and protector. (Aichi Prefecture website, "Culture in Aichi," 2016) Locals often claim that the festival traces its origins back around 800 years, with an unbroken, continuous practice since its inception, though this is difficult to verify and fairly unlikely. (Personal Interviews, 2015)

The festival itself consists of a number of different dances performed by townspeople of different ages, ranging from elementary school children to adults. These dances contain a number of ritual implements and choreographed moves, accompanied by a type of Japanese flute and taiko drums. The festival lasts for 24 hours, with dances performed continuously by a rotating selection of dancers and musicians.

Recently, however, the likelihood of *Hanamatsuri's* continued performance has come into doubt as the area's population falls sharply each year, a combination of low birthrates and out-migration by youth to larger cities for better education and employment opportunities. According to locals, without children to perform the dances, the festival cannot continue. (Personal Interviews, 2015) Of late, festivals in the nearby town of

Toyone have been indefinitely suspended, and are listed online as “on hiatus.” (Aichi Prefecture website, 2016)

Tōei, the village which hosts several of the *Hanamatsuri* celebrations, in addition to the “Tōei Festival,” (which itself incorporates some aspects of *Hanamatsuri*) has come to rely on *Hanamatsuri* as its main draw for tourists. The town is situated in the mountains along Aichi's border with Nagano Prefecture, about three hours east of Nagoya by train. Previously a lumber town, Tōei's economy has been on a downward trajectory since the bursting of Japan's economic bubble in the mid-1990s, and now relies mostly on tourism for its income. *Hanamatsuri* serves as the main attraction for outsiders, mostly domestic visitors seeking rare and novel Japanese traditions. The aforementioned out-migration has only aggravated the underlying difficulties Tōei faces, contributing to a cycle which seems to keep the town from overcoming its problems.

The townspeople feel the affects of these problems acutely. The potential loss of hometown cultural heritage evokes strong affective anxieties tied to the larger nation-state and overall future. Individuals wonder what steps they can take to revitalize their town and whether assistance from local or national government entities represent viable options. *Hanamatsuri*, however, does not currently have a designation as ICH. Despite anxieties, many expressed no immediate desire to pursue ICH status, concerned more with immediate issues and put off by the externality of both the process and the designating organization. (Personal interviews, 2015)

In examining the issues surrounding ICH in relation to something like *Hanamatsuri*, I hope to draw attention to the complex ways festivals and practices like them are constructed and disseminated as ICH. Research into affective circulation by Purnima Mankekar leads me to argue that not only affects circulate in and through objects, places, and experiences, but also ideas, understandings, and preconceptions. (Mankekar, 2015) I argue that this circulation reinforces preexisting notions about ICH and culture in general, for better or worse. This process greatly contributes to the affective sensation of "vanishing" so often associated with tradition and heritage, a sensation which appears to originate from policies and laws implemented in European colonies to protect indigenous peoples from harming their own sites. The idea that these places remain vulnerable, their futures uncertain, causes feelings of precarity.

In Chapter One, I discuss the idea of "re-orientalism" as a strategy potentially employed by non-Western countries seeking UNESCO's ICH status. "Re-Orientalism" involves the intentional performance or emphasizing of Orientalist characteristics, affects, or themes by Orientalized others for their own edification in dealing with "the Occident," usually for the purpose of increased "voice" or visibility. Generally speaking, this plays into existing pre-conceptions and stereotypes held by Western observers by appealing to their implicit biases. I also discuss the ways in which UNESCO's curated lists of ICH recontextualize the things themselves through their very inclusion on lists with one another. Both re-orientalism and listing have their effects exacerbated by the underlying structural systems of UNESCO's heritage designations, rooted in colonial laws and

policies for protection, conservation, and preservation of sites and objects, generally from indigenous and local people.

In Chapter Two, I look at Japan's construction of "the rural" through media generally meant to be consumed by urban individuals. I argue that "the rural" in Japan has grown increasingly abstract, disconnected from distinct places, times, and things, instead transposed onto general imagery—like mountains, lakes, or rivers—or concepts —such as tradition, heritage, femininity, or the past—which contributes to a growing sense of "vanishing" linked to precarity, and relevant to the idea of threatened cultural heritage. I also examine the ways in which the ideas of *furusato* and *Nihonjinron* dominate the discourse surrounding the rural in Japan. *Furusato* (literally "old village") is a term that encompasses a variety of affective engagements to ideas of a natal home village or origin point, and generally contains a core of strong nostalgia. *Nihonjinron* is a term for a discourse and field of study concerned with the idea of "essential, unique Japaneseness," or what makes the Japanese not only themselves, but differentiates them from all others.

Chapter Three deals with the precarity, affect, and circulation. Precarity exists as a deeply affective sensation typically tied to uncertainty, hoplessness, anxiety, and dread. I propose the idea of "cultural precarity," a sense of disappearing culture and heritage and its inevitability, as well as hopelessness in combating it. I also discuss how ICH could work as a site of affective circulation, a concept originally proposed by Purnima Mankekar. With affective circulation, different things both engage and accrete affects,

including places, people, events, and things strongly linked to the senses such as food smells, songs, images or pictures, and colors. In engaging with these various things, people both leave their own affects, and carry on those they have read from them. I argue that ICH functions as another important conduit for affective circulation, and that the apparatuses in place to support and promote ICH contribute to this circulation in numerous ways. Cultural precarity, as a strong affect or set of affects, could become enveloped in this complex circulation process. As a result, the circulation becomes a means of spreading cultural precarity and embedding it within ICH.

Chapter One: Re-Orientalism and Intangible Cultural Heritage

In speaking with some of my peers, I find few have a concrete grasp of the difference between “World Heritage” and “cultural heritage.” At the time of writing, the “World Heritage Sites” list stands at 1052 entries, while the “Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists” stand at 281. (UNESCO website, 2016) The difference in scope between World Heritage Sites and ICH objects can be vast, ranging from the entire island of Yakushima to the craftsmanship behind hand-made paper. (Ibid) However, in both cases, the entries in question may not function purely as representation of their respective items.

This chapter looks at “self-orientalization”as both a function of and strategy for the creation of “intangible cultural heritage” (ICH) as a category. It borrows the idea of “re-orientalization” from the work of Lisa Lau and Om Prakash Dwivedi as a method for both negotiating and reinforcing Orientalism by peoples and nations subject to orientalist categorization. It will also examine the ways in which intangible cultural heritage serves to facilitate this “re-orientalization”, using Japan as case study. Japan's role in developing the concept of intangible cultural heritage will be examined in relation to these Orientalist underpinnings.

I argue that certain features and processes involved in ICH designation, lists and listing in particular, stand as the most salient methods in reifying orientalist thinking through ICH, and I attempt to identify the ways those seeking and obtaining cultural heritage designations often utilize similar strategies. I articulate these other strategies

through the idea of a “heritagescape” with re-orientalism, in the vein of Arjun Appadurai's “-scapes” framework, an analytical frame that posits dense, inseparable global processes that mediate experience and understanding in society. (Appadurai, 2006)

I also argue that ICH implicitly invites feelings of “secondariness” because of its juxtaposition with tangible heritage, largely as a result of colonialist underpinnings inherent to regulations and laws concerning ICH. By filtering both Japan's involvement in the creation of ICH and ICH itself through lenses of Orientalism, re-orientalism, and a proposed “heritagescape,” this chapter points to the potential internalization of these concepts through affective circulation[1] and the potential for cultural preservation efforts to erode the values of connectedness and contemporaneity they ostensibly seek to safeguard.

This examination of ICH pays particular attention to the role of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and its establishment of “important intangible cultural heritage” as a particular category of “cultural heritage” understood differently at local, national, and international levels. The convention creating this designation, as well as historical background relating to UNESCO and its role in the understanding of heritage, will be explored in greater depth later in the chapter.

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1 See Chapter 3

"Re-orientalism" is a term coined by Lisa Lau and Om Prakash Dwivedi in their book *Re-Orientalism and Indian Writing in English*. They define re-orientalism as focusing on "contemporary dialectics between the East and the West," particularly the "representation of the East." For Lau and Dwivedi, places subjected to Orientalism may engage in re-orientalism partially because of "colonial inheritances" of power structures and paradigms derived from colonial Orientalism. This, in turn, deeply colors how colonized places represent themselves. Re-Orientalism "takes as its starting point...that the East has increasingly seized the power of representation; however, this representation is not exempt from being partial and skewed, and morever, it is still Western-centric and postcolonial." (Lau and Dwivedi, 2014, p. 2) While Lau and Dwivedi's book looks at the ways in which Indian writers engage in re-orientalism, this chapter argues that "re-Orientalism" as an analytical framework could be more broadly applied to other people, nationalities, and actions, particularly the designation of "intangible cultural heritage" and related discourses.

In discussing "Orientalism," this chapter uses Edward Said's conception of a particular way of thinking and talking about "the Orient," as opposed to "the Occident," originally put forth in his book *Orientalism*. According to Said, the Orient denotes a nebulously defined area stretching from the psychologically ephemeral and amorphous Middle East to East Asian countries such as China and Japan. The "orient" itself, in Said's view, is an imaginary repository for people, places, and things antithetical to the modern and rationalist Occident. The "Occident" stands in opposition to the Orient, i.e. those

people and places typically thought of as constituting “the West,” largely a Euro-American bloc defined as such mostly due to colonialism. (Said, 1978)

According to Said, Orientalism and orientalist thought began during the European Renaissance, when intellectuals and scholars looked back to the writings of Greek and Roman thinkers in an attempt to master and understand rationality, logic, and scientific reasoning. Renaissance intellectuals sought to prove an inherent superiority embodied by the modernity apparently displayed by European countries, in comparison to “backward” and “uncivilized” places throughout the world, particularly in the Orient. Orientalist thought, according to Said, truly began with colonialism, particularly among British officials learning to deal with their colonial subjects, and further evolved as officials and colonists attempted to understand and communicate impressions, ideas, and images of these “other” people and places back to those in the Occident with no exposure to the Orient. (Said, 1978) I argue that these colonial legacies embedded within Orientalism are deeply related to the conception and structure of ICH in the world today as a globalized entity.

Arjun Appadurai's conception of a globalized series of disjunctures, or “-scapes,”—originally the mediascape, ideoscape, technoscape, ethnoscape, and financescape—creating entangled, complicated relationships amongst themselves, provides another analytical framework for understanding ICH. (Appadurai, 2006) In “Disjuncture and Difference...” Appadurai posited a view of the world dominated by disjunctures that redefine and unbind borders of “culture,” reconfiguring its shape in both

everyday life and as a larger entity. While it might appear that fields like technology and finance operate on separate levels with little interaction, Appadurai argues that to understand such concepts requires understanding that they exist as fields ultimately inextricable from one another. (Ibid) They are not "objectively given relations that look the same from every angle of vision, but rather...deeply perspectival constructs, inflected by the historical, linguistic, and political situatedness of different sorts of actors..." (Appadurai, 2006, p. 586) Appadurai's ideas about reproduction and representation in a globalized age mediated by high volumes of information become particularly useful in considering "intangible cultural heritage" as not only a form and facet of culture, but also as a component of globalization.

But before examining ICH as a category and concept, it is important to understand what ICH is in a general sense, and what is meant in the term's use. The term ICH first gained currency during and immediately after the UNESCO *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (ICHC), a convention that was "adopted without dissenting vote by the general conference in October 2003 and entered into force on 20th April 2006." (Smith and Akagawa, 2009, p. 13) According to UNESCO, ICH includes "traditions and living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts." ("What is Intangible Cultural Heritage?", 2015) The webpage defining ICH goes on to characterize it as "fragile" and

an “important factor in maintaining cultural diversity in the face of growing globalization.” It is also “traditional, contemporary, and living at the same time,” “inclusive”, “representative”, and “community-based”. (Ibid) According to UNESCO, ICH is many things to as many people, while being both “traditional” and “contemporary”. Part of the reason for this apparent disconnect stems from ICH's *current* and *continued* existence of a long-held tradition. (Smith and Akagawa, 2009) Other contradictions arise from the number of countries vying for their interests amid the various UNESCO categories. (Ibid) Importantly, ICH is defined as “living”, and UNESCO goes out of its way to differentiate it from “monuments and collections of objects”, a reference to a previously-existing category and designation known as “World Heritage Sites”.

UNESCO created this “World Heritage” designation in much the same way as the more-recent ICH one. From October 17 to November 21, 1972, the United Nations held a conference in Paris which devised an international treaty called “The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage” on the subject of cultural preservation and protection, with discussions resulting in the formation of UNESCO's “World Heritage” designation and its missions. (UNESCO World Heritage Organization Website, 2015)

UNESCO's “World Heritage” designation, in both the “world cultural” and “natural” heritage senses, were felt to be too Eurocentric in their curation, particularly from countries located in Asia and Africa, a number of which had experienced

colonization. In examining the sites entered onto the list, an overwhelming majority were found to represent "the West", seemingly prioritizing its history and culture above others. Critics also felt that the designation focused too much on large-scale, physical sites, objects, and places, i.e. "tangible heritage," as opposed to "intangible" things like oral history and/or folklore, practices, and crafts. In order to assuage these critics and broaden the scope of what constituted "world heritage" and culture, UNESCO created separate categories and lists, namely the *Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore* in 1989, the *Living Human Treasure* guidelines in 1993, and the *Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity* in 1998. (Aikawa-Faure, "From the Proclamation of Masterpieces...", 2009)

However, these lists were criticized for introducing the nebulous, loaded idea of "masterpieces" into the conversation surrounding cultural heritage, and for further reinforcing particular notions of art, culture, and refinement that again prioritized a Eurocentric perspective. Additionally, critics felt the inclusion on lists, and the criteria by which things were judged in order to gain designation, established a form of hierarchy, even if unintentionally. (Hafstein, "Intangible heritage as a list...", 2009) These moves by UNESCO, and the continued criticism of its preexisting lists and categories, eventually led to the ICHC in 2003.

The ICHC and idea of ICH has strong ties to Japan, being extremely similar to Japan's own national designation of "intangible cultural properties". In the 1950s, Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs began a system of "cultural heritage" designation, passing the

"Enactment of the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties." This law set up a national system for the recognition, designation, and preservation of objects deemed as either "important tangible cultural properties" or "important intangible cultural properties." This law and its amendments follow from older preservation laws dating back to the Meiji Period in 1871. The tangible properties range from historical buildings, statues, and objects like swords, clothes, and artwork, to land such as lakes, mountains, forests, and islands. The "intangible" properties include things ranging from drama, music, and artisanal techniques for things like textile-making techniques, lacquerware, and metalwork, to people *possessing* such skills, and having the ability to pass on those skills to others. Master Japanese swordsmiths are a famous example of the so-called "National Living Treasures" covered under the "intangible cultural property" designation. ("Cultural Properties", 2015)

Japan was instrumental in creating the ICH designation. In 1999, Kōichirō Matsuura was appointed Director-General of UNESCO. Matsuura previously worked in a variety of positions within the Japanese government, mainly as a diplomat, beginning his career in the late 1950s. ("Koichiro Matsuura, UNESCO Website, 2015) After his appointment, Matsuura chose "ICH as one of the eight priority programmes of [UNESCO]," and initiated research into the development of a "new normative instrument" for identifying "cultural heritage." Notably, the Japanese government donated $3,200,000 in 2000 to both "the Masterpieces programme and the development of [a] new instrument." (Aikawa-Faure, 2009) Matsuura's appointment and the Japanese

government's donation were two of the strongest catalysts for the convention that led to the creation of the ICH designation by UNESCO. The frameworks for identifying and designating ICH objects themselves were also modeled largely on the Japanese government's "intangible cultural property" system. (Ibid)

Japan's interest in defining ICH could be seen as relating to its own national interest in defining tradition, culture, and heritage for the Japanese nation-state and people. The histories of both "cultural heritage" and "tradition" in Japan can be traced back to the period generally considered the beginning of Japan's "modernization," typically associated with the Meiji Period, beginning in 1868, the Taisho period from 1912 to 1926, and into the early Showa period. At the same time as the country began its attempts to capture "modernity" through science, rationality, industrialization, and militarization, it started the project of establishing the coherent history of the "Nation of Japan," in much the same way as other countries during the rush to modernity. (Brandt, 2007) This project focused largely on locating the past in the rural, associating tradition and cultural heritage in folk beliefs, practices, and myths, and juxtaposing this past against the scientific, cosmopolitan, knowledge-based modern. (Foster, 2011) These traditional folk practices were an important tool in defining an essential "Japanese-ness" through which the contemporary nation-state could identify itself for the edification of both its own citizens and the broader international community of nation-states, as well as mark its place on the ladder of progress towards "modernity." (Aso, 2014)

"Folk practices" fall under the umbrella of "intangible cultural properties" when they concern things like religious practice, festivals, rituals, dances, and other "folk" customs or culture. This designation stems from Yanagita Kunio's (1875-1962) *minzokugaku* (folklore studies) definition of "folk," which mostly reduces to "rural areas" and isolated people, with an emphasis in his studies on the "non-material elements of rural culture—such as folklore, language, custom, and belief..." and his work researching and elucidating the folk traditions, stories, rituals, festivals, and peculiarities of rural Japan. (Brandt, 2007) Yanagita's influence is felt and understood widely, often being credited as an "originary author" in popular and academic writing about folklore and folk studies in Japan.[2] (Ivy, 1995).

A large part of this project of defining the "Japanese traditional past" occurred through the institutionalization of museums throughout urban Japan. Imperial museums served the function of displaying, codifying, and explicating this traditional past for the average Japanese person to understand and experience, as well as establishing credibility and authority for this historical narrative through their existence as a function of the Japanese government. The government's deployment of scientific rationality as the basis for the museum system added further legitimacy to the enterprise. These museums, through this controlled, accessible-yet-not display, created an atmosphere of disjuncture or separation that marked the boundary between "tradition" and "modernity" for visiting crowds. (Aso, 2014)

2 For a slightly more in-depth look at Yanagita Kunio, please see Chapter 2.

These urges to classify, codify, display, and list have roots in Enlightenment thinking, prevalent throughout the era of colonization by European nations, and derive from modernist attitudes towards scientific rationality. The Japanese nation-state presented its colonial "museum thinking" again at the Fifth National Exposition held in Osaka in 1903. One of the displays at this pavilion, the "Anthropology Pavilion," a privately funded exhibit, involved the displaying of people from nearby, "lesser" countries, including China, Taiwan, Korea, Okinawa, Malaysia, Java, India, and the Ainu, who were "showcased in environments that supposedly replicated their customary living conditions and also offered special performances...." (Aso, 2014) This display attempted to highlight Japan's position above these uncivilized, backwards groups, thereby asserting its elevated position in the modernization hierarchy. Despite being privately funded, the inclusion of "Anthropology" in the title of the pavilion was viewed as a move by "state officials to give the exhibit coherence and respectability," and was conferred even greater legitimacy by the inclusion and approval of the University of Tokyo's new Department of Anthropology. (Ibid). This linked the exhibit not only with state authority, but scientific rationality, through "museum-ification" of these peoples, and put Japan's own colonial projects on direct display.

Classification, organization, and display are not only important to the process of "museum-ification," but also to the designation projects enacted by UNESCO. A large part of the criticism leading to the ICHC and ICH as a category was leveled at the "World Heritage" and "masterpiece" designations as hierarchical and unrepresentative of the

interests and culture of generally non-European nations, exhibiting Eurocentric ideas about what constituted a “masterpiece.” In effect, many nations felt as if these previous designations and lists functioned as subordinating mechanisms by making large swathes of non-European culture and heritage invisible through their exclusion. (Aikawa-Faure, 2009)

Vladimar Hafstein explicates the nature of “lists” in relation to the discourse surrounding cultural heritage and UNESCO. According to Hafstein, attendees of the ICHC identified lists and listing as problems during the convention itself. Hafstein contends that the debate around lists “[goes] to the heart of heritage practices, which are always and inevitably selective.” (Hafstein, “Intangible Heritage as a list...”, 2009, p. 93) “The system of heritage,” he says, “is structured on exclusion: it gives value to certain things rather than others with reference to an assortment of criteria that can only ever be indeterminate.” (Ibid) He draws a comparison between the ways heritage and lists both “depend on selection.” (Ibid)

Listing can be read in a number of different ways, and its function and utilization varies depending on who is reading or viewing the list. Perhaps the most salient argument Hafstein presents is that of decontextualisation. Hafstein writes that lists “decontextualise their objects from their immediate surroundings and recontextualise them with reference to other things designated or listed.” (Ibid) In UNESCO's stated goals for ICH, “living” culture that is both traditional and contemporary is enacted as a continuous process for those involved. However, this decontextualisation as a list-item removes ICH from its

initial national, local, and/or community context. As Hafstein points out, the list also recontextualises the items *with* one another, creating a virtual field of "heritage," which becomes the new context list-readers apprehend. The act of list-inscription also serves to simplify the idea of ICH to its "essence"—selected items come to be viewed as "representative" of ICH, in general. (Hafstein, 2009)

Both the Meiji-era "museum-ification" and decontextualizing effects of listing were apparent in my experiences with *Hanamatsuri*. Tōei featured museums for both local and natural history, and one specifically for the festival itself. The museums featured a standard assembly of exhibits, including old agricultural tools, outfits, old artifacts, and important documents. The *Hanamatsuri* museum, however, commanded a slightly larger space, set apart from the natural history museum. It also featured in-depth explanations of the various outfits, masks, implements, and dances. For many of the townspeople, this display served as a proud emblem of local traditions and heritage. For outsiders, however, the effect might be quite different, reconfirming implicitly held assumptions about the "exotic" nature of these practices.

Brochures and other informational material about *Hanamatsuri* often list the various festivals together. This could have several effects similar to the concerns outlined by Hafstein. First, these lists immediately decontextualize the festivals, stripping them from their actual places, recontextualizing them as one of a number of recurring events, perhaps implying they are nothing that special. Secondly, though they are listed in order of when they occur, this still has the effect of presenting an implicit hierarchy. Both of

these can amplify preexisting feelings of competition between the various instances of *Hanamatsuri* celebrations.

Putting these ideas about listing in dialogue with Appadurai's scapes, a new picture of ICH begins to emerge. Much in the same way Appadurai discusses the de- and re- contexualisation of culture through globalized media consumption and individual understanding, the list serves to virtually extract and relocate culture and heritage, depositing it alongside other "intangible cultural heritage," with some implicit meaning and value attached arising from both the ICH and the one consuming it. The list itself becomes a piece of media for consumption, and its existence as an object of an international organization like UNESCO places it already within the sweep of global flows, inflected by the accompanying baggage and its situation near and within other global scapes. (Appadurai, 2006)

Rather than viewing ICH as just another object caught within these flows, it might be more useful to consider ICH as part of another type of "scape," along the lines of Appadurai's own proposed ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, et al. An emerging "heritagescape" composed of those items raised to visibility through designations like UNESCO's own ICH, embeds both the category and object itself within the entangled flows described by Appadurai. (Appadurai, 2006) The heritagescape comes to encompass not only the actual ICH designees, but also the discourse surrounding ICH. The processes necessary to lobby, locate, designate and administer ICH form the heritagescape flow, and the various interests and parties become its embedded actors. If viewed as entangled with

other such scapes blanketing the globalized world, examining ICH without the greater contexts of history, nationalism, economics, and other such things becomes essentially meaningless. This, however, seems to be exactly what inclusion and inscription on an ICH list invites in its audience.

Appadurai also makes the argument that individuals increasingly employ imagination in constructing their worlds, both those nearby, as well as a wider world they might never experience. (Appadurai, 1996). It might be worth considering what role world heritage, masterpieces, and ICH play in the construction and conception of the "wider world," how people might appropriate or incorporate their understandings of tradition and cultural heritage, and how they might articulate those understandings with the people and places represented on those lists. It is surely no accident that two of the most prominent examples of ICH in Japan—kabuki and noh theater—have also come to stand for its recognition internationally as a country of "heritage" and "tradition." How, then, might ICH-embodied concepts like "tradition" and "folk practices" function when associated with Japan and other classically "non-Western" countries, whose cultural heritage the ICHC was ostensibly developed to help support?

The articulation of Asian countries with ICH mirrors the colonial-era policies and thinking that led to the creation of Eurocentric designations like world heritage. As Timothy P. Barnard discusses in his chapter in the *Routledge Handbook of Heritage in Asia*, the "conservation" discourse and rhetoric employed in much of the discussion surrounding world and cultural heritage has historical roots in colonial governments'

regulating colonized people's places and land. Colonial authorities felt that indigenous peoples “didn't know the value” of their land, so they instituted and enforced laws dictating the utilization of such sites to them. (Barnard, 2012) These laws, in addition to regulating the trade of exotic species of animal, artifacts, and “protecting” sites from the traditional practices of indigenous people (who authorities often felt may have been inadvertently destroying said sites), expressed a particular paternal, colonial mindset about who might know best in cataloging and managing objects and sites deemed important or culturally relevant. Those “knowing best” were, invariably, the colonizers. (Ibid) Christina Kreps compares the “rescuing” and conservation missions of ICH to that of “nineteenth-century 'salvage ethnography,[3]'” finding that it “[disconcertingly]...echoes [those] sentiments.” (Kreps, “Curation, Museums, and Intangible Culture”, 2009) If these ideas of heritage come with colonialist underpinnings, they come with orientalist ones as well, particularly regarding what exactly constitutes recognizable tradition and what might be worthy of protection.

Also at stake are the ideas of “authenticity” embedded in the list-nature of ICH, which works as more of an implicit association. Despite the efforts of UNESCO to mark ICH as distinct from world heritage and natural heritage, many of the same assumptions and problematics carry over, particularly the underlying implication that certain sites and objects require international recognition and protection. This has as much to do with the form of the category as the content itself. Marilena Alivizatou highlights this issue of

3 “Salvage ethnography” refers to an early mode of anthropological study whose main purpose was to document and record the languages, practices, cultures, and folklore traditions of people whose ways of life seemed likely to disappear.

authenticity, writing, "...[authenticity]...implies that cultural heritage, either in the form of buildings, objects, or oral expressions, is an original manifestation of the past in the present and therefore needs to be preserved intact for future generations." (Alivizatou, 2012, p. 16) Alivizatou points to how this authenticity is in need of protection, of conservation; the ICHC built this into ICH itself. ICH is under threat from "'globalization and the ensuing 'social transformation,'" which "[threaten] the intangible heritage of humanity with 'deterioration, disappearance, and destruction.'" (Alivizatou 36) Linking back to Appadurai, however, the heritagescape itself becomes a part of this globalization and, in effect, contributes to its own threatened status.

The heritagescape carries these embedded notions of authenticity, the legacies of colonialism, and orientalist thought into the process of globalization, which in turn influences the ways people conceive of tradition, cultural heritage, and the nations and place within them these things are thought to inhabit. It enmeshes itself in the other processes constituting globalization and sinks into the background, becoming harder and harder to distinguish from the discourse surrounding it. Those acting to preserve, those acting to regulate, those acting to designate, and those acting to consume ICH all contribute to the growing heritagescape, and inadvertently impart their own conceptions into the disjunctive flows. Tourism oriented around World Heritage sites and ICH have consequences for local and national economies, and potentially invite the outside into the local. (McGuire, 2013) In turn, the widespread availability of new personal media technology, like photo-taking and video recording devices in cell phones, can generate

interest in ICH, at the same time mediating general understanding about what culture and heritage mean.

In understanding how the discourse around ICH is constituted, the positioning of re-orientalism as a function of this discourse—and of the globalized heritagescape—becomes apparent. ICH can be understood as a form of representation, especially self-representation, and as Lau and Dwivedi point out, "...despite having far more access to self-representation than previously, deep-rooted postcolonial legacies continue re-enforcing the significant power imbalance, particularly in the way knowledge is selected, constructed, authorised, then recognised, legitimised, and disseminated." (Lau and Dwivedi, 2014, p. 3) These continued imbalances, "[owe] much to the colonial structures of power long embedded globally, via institutional structures and hierarchies, systems of knowledge, languages and literature, and colonisation of minds." (Ibid)

In Lau and Dwivedi's view, "...the East is often as Wester-centric as the West, looking to the West as its reference point and thereby producing discourse which speaks as much *to* the West as *for* the East." (Lau and Dwivedi, 2014, p. 4; emphasis in original) This representation "continues to be filtered through Western lenses (in very similar style to Orientalism) and to reference the West as 'Centre' in framing the representations and anticipating the audiences....Eastern representations...continue in large part through Western lenses, within Western frames of discourse, and via Western knowledge systems." (Ibid, p. 5) I posit that re-orientalism operates similarly for ICH, especially in light of its inherent internationalization under the auspices of UNESCO.

Not only the writer, but also the audience, holds importance in framing and shaping discourse. (Lau and Dwivedi, 2014) Who are the audiences for ICH and world heritage? As much as the international community appreciates and consumes ICH, as curated by UNESCO, the citizens of the home countries/nation-states receiving designations also partake in this appreciation and consumption. Ostensibly, designation serves these people more than any external entity, while also elevating the ICH to the level of "humanity's shared culture." This is, at least, one of UNESCO's goals in maintaining the ICH list. (Aikawa-Faure, 2009)

Understanding how these varying audiences "read" ICH also becomes a concern. Francois Hartog makes the argument that in reading "the other," audiences also read themselves. The assumptions embedded within the language, imagery, and objects of focus by the author represent implicit notions held by both author and audience concerning their internal, implicit view of the other about which they write. Writing about the "other" serves as a mirror for the "self." (Hartog, 1988)

Lau and Dwivedi make a similar point in discussing Indian authors writing about India, particularly regarding "poverty and marginality," stating that the West has "certain and quite specific demands" in reading Indian authors writing in English, because readers are not simply reading and consuming India, but "their own Western identities reflected back to them...a flattering and reassuring reflection...." (Lau and Dwivedit, 2014, p. 17) To find acceptance, the "packaging must therefore take a form which meets Western

expectation and yet be charmingly different enough to set itself apart as other, as foreign, as Oriental, in a nutshell, as exotic." (Ibid, 18)

Although Lau and Dwivedi's arguments focus on Indians writing in English, the "reading" of heritage sites and ICH has the potential to be just as reflective and interpretive for consuming audiences. If, however, two major audiences are the nation-state and its citizens themselves, how and what does ICH reflect back onto those nation-states? What does it reflect onto the people reading what is ideally an inscription of their own culture and heritage? Thinking of ICH again as part of a heritagescape, it carries with it not only the embedded and encoded Orientalism, but also the globalization that comes with entanglement as a scape in the first place. Readings of ICH function not only as reassurance, reconfirmation, and reification of particular ideas about national identity and national tradition, but also about the position and status of the nation and its traditions in relation to an implied hierarchy of other nations.

In the case of Japan, its role in conceptualizing and defining ICH both internally and internationally through UNESCO cannot be understated. Relatedly, Japan's past role in spreading Orientalism through colonialism, as practitioners themselves of definitively colonialist policies and thinking, becomes more pertinent in considering the shape of ICH and efforts to mark, list, and protect it. Japan's own "intangible cultural property" designation, bearing similarities to the colonial conservation and protection policies examined by Barnard, should give one pause when considering the ways in which

policies and laws often subtly carry the baggage of the past, re-inscribing it onto the present. (Barnard, 2012)

A relevant example comes through Japanese government assistance to India. Aki Toyoyama discusses the nature of Buddhist heritage in Japan by Japan's actions in the conservation of Buddhist sites in India. Toyoyama ties these efforts to Japanese colonialism and Orientalism, stating that the Japanese government's "Official Development Assistance" serves as an "important representation of Japanese cultural identity and its constructed relationship with heritage in Asia." She goes on to note that the "Japanese connection with India is part of a history of a Japanese expression of Orientalism, crafted through both engagement with Western forms of knowledge production and Japanese political ambitions." (Toyoyama, "Preceptions of Buddhist heritage in Japan", 2012, 341)

This example demonstrates the ways Japan continues to engage in Orientalism for both reasons of national identity and international politics. This Orientalism manifests in actions informed by Japan's own colonial past. With this in mind, it does not seem much of a stretch to examine current Japanese efforts to establish its place on UNESCO's World, Natural, and Intangible cultural heritage lists through the lens of re-orientalist practices. These lists themselves function as globalized, highly visible representations, and come to constitute the heritagescape as it is understood by a great many people.

Again, re-orientalism functions not simply as Orientalism enacted by "the Oriental" against themselves. Re-orientalism does not happen by accident, per se, rather

agents purposefully perform it as a means of negotiating representation of themselves *and* the East, a representation filtered through the notion of "the West-as-center", stemming from "colonial inheritances of paradigms of power." (Lau and Dwivedi, 2014, p. 2) Japan's role in creating and publicizing ICH speaks to the subtle ways Orientalism emerges through strategies and practices of representation—in other words, through re-orientalism.

Going back to the nature of lists examined by Hafstein, inscription on the list works as a means of increasing visibility and elevating recognition through representative entries, or at least entries *deemed* representative. But again, this listing comes with the implicit connotations of hierarchy, decontextualization, recontexualization, and prestige. (Hafstein, 2009) For ICH, this comes also with juxtaposition against the World/Natural heritage lists, a list of tangible cultural heritage that appears to prioritize the Euro-American over the Eastern. Because of its inception after "tangible world heritage," does ICH evoke secondariness? In conceiving of ICH as "less Eurocentric", does it come to embody the colonialist and orientalist? By examining ICH, the ICHC, and Japan's involvement in both, filtered through these frameworks of Orientalism, re-orientalism, and the heritagescape, this chapter has argued that perhaps the answer is "yes."

When the Japanese government looks at tradition and culture within its borders, what is it seeing? When UNESCO looks, what do they see? What does any reader of heritage lists see? What are they reading, and how are they reading it? What this chapter has examined is not an answer to these questions, because focusing too much on

individual pieces of ICH elides the greater framework structuring any given entity's gaze upon the list. Rather, this chapter identifies and foregrounds these structures, shifting the focus away from ICH itself to the ways ICH has become a discourse, has become part of a "-scape" caught up in the flows of globalization, and explores how these elements continue to configure ICH itself, how they color the lens that often remains too close to see.

All this said, my goal is not simply to impugn ICH or the organizations and people involved in recognizing and protecting it. I do believe UNESCO and the ICHC work towards a worthwhile goal in principle, particularly regarding the issue of raising the visibility of people concerned about their heritage, even if this recognition comes with strings attached. ICH, UNESCO, and UNESCO-like organizations and lists are also seen by many people and groups as doing good, for many of the same reasons. I am more interested in highlighting the complex and subtle undercurrents tinging ICH itself, the practices developed to recognize and protect it, and the discourse ICH engenders. Because of the perceived positives with which people tend to regard ICH, it becomes easier to understand why peoples and nations might actively engage in re-orientalism to gain the perceived benefits that accompany ICH designation and status.

The apparatuses for identifying and defining ICH generally are heavily inflected by UNESCO's own conception of it, and thus by colonialism and Orientalism. In working to meet the criteria put forth by organizations like UNESCO, designation-seekers at all levels often engage in a form of re-orientalism that, while serving ostensibly as a method

of self-control and self-representation, also works to re-inscribe these colonial and orientalist legacies back onto themselves. The structure creates the problem, frames the ideas and categories; adopting the structure adopts the frame and invites repetition and reproduction as an easy method of navigating and negotiating the heritagescape in a global context. But the consequences manifest themselves in the renewed modes of contest, hierarchy, and prestige enabled by the ICH framework on levels ranging from intra- to international.

Likewise, the essentializing and "traditionalizing" aspects of Orientalism work their way back into the conversations surrounding nation, culture, and development. ICH evokes images of tradition, of past, and of pre-civilization; list inscription further recontextualizes heritage and tradition as vaguely equivalent while paradoxically invoking hierarchical arrangement. ICH's status as "intangible" further contextualizes the inscribed ICH representations in relation to the "tangible" world heritage and natural heritage sites, in effect perpetuating the legacies of colonialism and Orientalism, something the ICHC explicitly wanted to avoid. Japan, in its position as a vocal advocate and practitioner of ICH inscription and safeguarding, stands precariously at the intersections of culture, heritage, and politics, problematically recasting itself and others as "the Orient" through re-orientalism because it produces results. Japan and ICH's history, as well as their relationship with colonialism and Orientalism, colors ICH as decidedly less universal and altruistic than it might appear at first glance. Whatever

strategies may be developed in dealing with ICH and the like in the future, attention and care must be paid to the form these strategies, and ICH itself, take.

Chapter Two: Rural Japan and Affective Engagement

This chapter focuses on the popular conception and presentation of rural Japan, particularly in recent online video media and through past domestic tourism campaigns. In particular, it will examine the largely homogenous image of rural areas and people, informed by concepts including *furusato*, locality studies, and the status of the rural as domestic other. I argue that conceptualization of the rural as a receptacle for Japan's tradition, culture, and place of rest unmoors "rural" from actual places like Tōei and the city of Iida and re-couples it to generalized abstractions, including physical landscape features and received images.

In Japan, similar to many other parts of the world, the word "rural" evokes a vast array of affective associations, linked to sounds, sights, tastes, and emotions. Conversations with Japanese people about rural places tends to elicit similar comments, pulling on a seemingly shared repository of images, words, and ideas. The word *inaka* has a meaning encompassing the general countryside, but also an image of low-population, backwater areas and people. For many young people, linkage with *inaka* carries connotations of "someone who lacks sophistication," and often arouses feelings of embarrassment or shame. (Traphagan, 2000) In contrast, *furusato* raises the specter of the peaceful, nostalgic hometown, filled with traditional ways and folk beliefs, things potentially out-of-reach to contemporary Japanese society. Other associations with

furusato include agriculture, particularly rice paddies, and lush landscapes filled with trees, mountains, and rivers.

The term *furusato* encapsulates a variety of affective engagements and associations linked to rural areas and life for a majority of Japanese people. *Furusato* translates literally to “old village”; as Jennifer Robertson puts it, “closer English equivalents are 'home' and 'native place', and [it] has become a term encompassing deeper feelings towards old villages, tradition, and nature, calling to mind particular images and times.” (Robertson, 1988) In the hometowns, villages, and native places evoked by *furusato*, there is a sense of primordial origin, of natal longing, of vague olden times wholly separate from the current moment.

As Robertson notes, *furusato* “is a word, or signifier, whose very ubiquity may camouflage its importance for understanding and interpreting Japanese culture.” (Robertson, 1988) She goes on to say that the “evocation of *furusato* is an increasingly cogent means of simultaneously fostering we-feelings and insideness at local and national levels.” (Ibid) Its strong affective dimension would seem to have the effect of eliding the discoursal qualities for a majority of Japanese people, who engage more with the immediate nostalgia and imagery associated with *furusato,* rather than the rural itself.

Furusato also evokes a newer sense of “vanishing” because of its strong articulation with tradition, heritage, and the countryside, all areas and concepts felt by the contemporary Japanese nation to be under threat. These things are “passing away, gone but not quite, suspended between presence and absence, located at a point that both is and

is not here in the repetitive process of absenting." (Ivy, 1995) This idea of vanishing is "newer" only in as much as *furusato* is a newer term carrying this affect; the idea of a disappearing rural containing all of the important pieces of Japanese heritage, tradition, and wisdom goes back as far as the work of Yanagita Kunio. (Ibid)

Along with *furusato* comes *furusato-zukuri*, summarized by Robertson as "the process by which *furusato* is evoked into existence," with a meaning of "home/native-place making." (Ibid) Robertson concludes that *furusato-zukuri* is"a political process by which culture, as a collectively constructed and shared system of symbols, customs, and beliefs, is socially reproduced." (Ibid)

The discourse of the rural links to tradition and heritage, which sometimes link further to ideas of femininity, myth, and otherness, often attributed to the work of scholars in the late-Meiji and Taisho periods on subjects like anthropology and folklore studies (*minzokugaku*). (Brandt, 2011) The work of Yanagita Kunio (1875 – 1962) in particular did much to elevate the image of the rural, countryside, and things essentialized as *non-urban* to a mystic, etheric "other" position, linked to the natal origins of the modern Japanese nation-state. (Ivy, 1995) Yanagita is generally regarded as the scholar that gave the rural and traditional their prestige as vestiges of a disappearing Japan. (Brandt, 2011)

Yanagita worked to preserve and document the folk stories, traditions, practices, and customs of various villages and peoples throughout the Japanese countryside, with the goal of tracing the origins of something akin to the Japanese soul, and thus the

Japanese people, to identify what made them uniquely *Japanese.* (Ivy, 1995) He began his research with the "mountain people" of Japan. Compelled by his sense of urgency surrounding rural poverty, he attempted to salvage his idea of traditional Japan by recording folklore. This rural poverty, in his view, arose from economic conditions resulting from Japan's modernization. Yanagita himself had witnessed some amount of hardship in rural areas growing up, and turned to academic study after fruitless reform attempts within modern Japanese bureaucracy as a civil servant. (Mitsuru, 1998)

Yanagita's position on the importance of peripheral people and places as the heart of "true Japaneseness" drove him to theorize on the *jomin* (abiding folk), who "resided everywhere in Japan, yet at the same time...existed nowhere." (Ibid) The *jomin* eventually became "an imaginative reconstruction of essential Japanese life" for Yanagita, and represented to him an original Japanese people that were "the very ordinary peasants." (Ibid)

Yanagita's project aligned with the more rational-scientific cataloging/display mission of museums, expositions, and scientists[4], whose ultimate goal was to demonstrate the progress the modern Japanese nation-state had made *away* from these "old-fashioned" and implicitly backwards ways. This would, in effect, bring Japan up to the perceived level of advanced civilization occupied by Western nations. (Brandt, 2011) Yanagita's mission, while in line with the methods of the time, opted to focus specifically on the unique, humanizing oral folk traditions that he believed gave way to current Japanese society's modern progress. (Ivy, 1995) Yanagita's investment in these matters of urgent

4 Discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two

rural reform and his lament at the loss of "traditional" and "real" Japan belie the affective sentiments, especially nostalgic ones, plaguing modernist intellectuals of the time.

Eventually, the study of what makes the Japanese uniquely Japanese, or *Nihonjinron*, gained considerable cache and visibility. It continued to be a topic of discussion and theory in Japanese society even into the 1990s, but especially during the height of Japan's economic success in the 1980s. (Rea, 2000) *Nihonjinron* studies follow a similar line of thought as folklore studies, but without the myopic focus on tradition, folklore, and the wisdom of rural people as the basis for Japanese national character (Ivy, 1988).

Nihonjinron posits the idea that there is something *unique* and *singular* that separates Japanese people from "everyone else," and that there is some way to identify, study, and enhance this for the benefit of the Japanese people and nation. (Ivy, 1995) In his anthropological examination of *Nihonjinron* and its study, Harumi Befu identifies *Nihonjinron* as "[demonstrating] unique qualities of Japanese culture, Japanese society, and the Japanese people." (Befu, 2001) Despite its roots going back to the Tokuguawa period, Befu argues that the popular cache that *Nihonjinron* holds stems largely from a "symbolic vacuum," created by negative associations with loss and imperialism attached to the usual national symbols, like the flag and emperor, which were prominently featured during the Second World War. (Befu, "Symbols of nationalism and *Nihonjinron*, 2003) With the absence of such symbols, Befu argues that people search for national identity in

other ways, which leads to a homogenizing essentialization of “the Japanese people.” (Befu, 2001)

This essentializing thread in *Nihonjinron* belies a greater tendency towards homogenization also at work when conceptualizing not only the rural, but the nation-state in general. Jonathan Traphagan and Christopher Thompson note that an area like Japan's Tohoku region is “...[a] region of Japan that is often viewed, by Japanese, as quintessentially traditional and, thus, particularly representative of a homogeneous Japan with homogeneous, traditional values,” at least in part because of its perception as a rural region. (Traphagan and Thompson, 2006)

Even with a decline in public awareness, folklore studies' effects on the perception of rural and countryside areas in Japan persists into contemporary times. Through a variety of mediums, the discourse started during Japan's modernization period maintains a strong grip on the general populace's understanding and conception of such regions. (Love, 2013) Yet the separation of “urban” and “rural” has grown increasingly thin, with the majority of so-called rural areas containing a variety of “modern” industries and facilities. As Traphagan and Thompson put it, “concepts such as urban and rural, traditional and modern have come to bear only limited connection to place, instead being abstracted into the realm of ideas people use and manipulate as they create and adapt to their contemporary social milieu.” (Traphagan and Thompson, 2006) However, despite growing abstraction pushing conception of the rural towards generic markers—like rivers, mountains, or rice fields—attempts to bind the rural strongly and affectively to

these markers seem to have the effect of re-grounding the notion of rural through a correlative association.

Over the last couple of decades, Japan has seen a steady decline in the economic and social standings of rural towns and villages. Some of this can be attributed to the economic collapse of the 1990s, but other factors, including out-migration and demographic issues, have also aggravated these problems. During the 70s and 80s, attempts to encourage urban citizens to make use of various private travel options around the nation resulted in tourism campaigns pushing for "discovery" and novelty. (Ivy, 1988)

More recently, governments, activists, and locals have turned to the idea of "locality studies" as a means of recuperation and restoration of rural areas through methods of of decentralization and an emphasis sustainability. Although partially differentiated from it, locality studies demonstrates a continuing preoccupation with *furusato* in efforts to revitalize and consider rural areas and peoples. (Love, 2013) As Bridget Love points out, "proponents of locality studies frame it as a rediscovery" for residents, (Ibid) which echoes earlier "Discover Japan" and "Exotic Japan" tourism campaigns that emphasized ideas of nearby national discovery and novelty. (Ivy, 1988) In shifting the focus from non-locals to locals, however, Love suggests that this notion of rediscovery causes local residents "to reenvision their homes...as durable and sustainable localities under their stewardship." (Love, 2013)

Love positions these locality studies efforts as "part of a troubling revitalization trend in which bureaucrats, activists, and academics seek to mobilize rural inhabitants to

sustain their homes" while eliding the greater "confluence of dilemmas" at work in these areas, including, "population aging, out-migration, economic decline, and more recent regional decentralization." (Ibid) As such, more parallels can be drawn between earlier efforts to stave off rural decline and promote reductive framing over more complex discussion. These efforts by locality studies proponents also influence the way the urban markets the rural.

Marilyn Ivy suggests there are a few different levels of quotation and differentiation at play in urban marketing's perspective of the rural. Using two separate advertising campaigns to encourage domestic tourism (with an emphasis on the utilization of trains as transportation), both "Discover Japan" and "Exotic Japan" presented two seemingly divergent perspectives on non-urban Japanese places, but through similar means. (Ivy, 1988)

According to Ivy, "Discover Japan" emphasized a momentary, narrative encapsulation of the rural as slices of life frozen in frame, scenes that played on a visual and lingual othering. The visual othering stemmed from the use of "unusual" scenes, for example a monk sweeping in front of a temple in the mountains or an elderly farmer planting crops, which also blended an element of everyday life. The lingual came from the use of English for the campaign name itself, "Discover Japan." Both methods worked to place the observer in a subject position outside a daily, typical existence within the urban conceived of as the norm, with the intention of positing these instances as distinctly novel experiences waiting for the observer's encounter. (Ibid)

“Exotic Japan”, on the other hand, utilized a photo collage layout, katakana script for the campaign name, and a young, stylish model to portray an idea of a close-yet-distant Japan, an “exotic” Japan previously unknown to the viewer. This change in approach signaled a departure from the notion of “discovery” to that of “novelty,” and brought visual and linguistic cues into a very different space. The collage layouts emphasized the plethora of choice, presenting an array of nearby-yet-unknown slices of exotica. The young model demonstrated the campaign's demographic aims, and at the same time subtly linked the exotic with femininity. (Ibid)

Strategies for marketing the rural seem to have changed little, with a mixture of the stylistic strategies of both “Discover” and “Exotic” incorporated into various media and advertisements encouraging domestic tourism. With the advent of online videos, both professional and homemade representations of trips to and from rural areas have become accessible to a wider variety of curious seekers. These videos generally choose not to linger too long in one location, instead cutting between areas and moments of note. The collage array of still pictures has given way to a montage of moving pictures and sound.

One recent effort to promote the city of Iida in Nagano Prefecture comes in the form of four 26-minute travel show episodes featuring various aspects of the city, its culture, and surrounding points of interest called *Iida Tokimeki Trip*. The coming magnetic levitation train line connecting Tokyo and Nagoya (and eventually Osaka), with a stop in Iida, served as the impetus for this show's creation. The show is hosted by Kimura U, a young street fashion model, blogger, and former “Ambassador of Cute” for

Japan, and Benny, a young, popular Taiwanese user of social media site Instagram with fans in both Japan and his home country of Taiwan. (*Iida Tokimeki Trip*,2014)

Kimura U sports eye-catching, half-purple, half-pink pastel hair, and frilly, pastel-colored clothes, while Benny wears a more understated array of jeans and t-shirts or button-ups. Together, they explore anime and fandom culture in Iida, local foods and restaurants, nearby rural mountains and inns, and "secluded stations" (*hikyō eki*) along the existing, analogue Iida Line. (Ibid)

The other host, Benny, typically appears for the major stops in the videos, but is other times visibly absent. In contrast to Kimura U, Benny dresses in the aforementioned plaid button down shirts and jeans. He speaks in a slower, slightly more monotone voice, occasionally breaking into Mandarin Chinese to communicate more complex opinions on each videos' proceedings. His presence as a distinctly "outside," male presence marks the videos as attempting to fully incorporate a "cool," youthful sensibility, with undertones of Taiwan's complicated history with Japan, as Benny praises various consumerist aspects of Japan. It also recalls the Othering strategies in the previous "–Japan" tourism campaigns, providing an external, touristic perspective to internal, "foreign" things, things which ostensibly are not foreign at all because they originate within Japan.

Iida Tokimeki Trip was "simulcast" (meaning it was simultaneously "broadcast" in both Japan and abroad) through the popular Japanese media streaming website Crunchyroll, which hosts licensed properties like Japanese and Korean dramas, animation, films, and variety shows. (Crunchyroll website, 2016) The practice of

simulcasting has gained popularity and use among content providers offering Japanese media like anime and dramas, but the choice to simulcast a domestic tourism show like *Iida Tokimeki Trip* may speak more to the optimism of both the show and provider's sponsors than to the show's pure entertainment potential for international audiences. While ostensibly crafted to pique the interest of Japanese people, particularly those in Tokyo, Nagoya, and Osaka that might not stop in Iida on the way to their destinations, the availability of the show outside Japan with subtitles raises the question of utility. To what extent does the production hope to increase international tourism to Iida? The 2020 Olympics set to take place in Tokyo might provide another clue, with great potential to increase tourism to areas near Tokyo in the lead up to the event.

Episodes three and four of the show, "The Valley Where the Gods Come Down," (2014) and "The Valley of the Linear Car, Secluded Stations, and Transportation," (2014) respectively, hold the most relevance to an examination of the rural. Episode three focuses on an isolated, rural village on one of the mountains surrounding Iida, with the hosts, Kimura U and Benny, exploring a small village (some of which rests on the steep mountain incline), meeting some of its residents, and trying out local foods and activities.

Episode four talks about the railway systems in Iida itself, concentrating on both the preexisting railway system and the coming high-speed rail. In discussing the existing railway system, the show highlights so-called "secluded stations," hard-to-reach stations where very few people board and alight, most of which are entirely unattended, if accommodations for railway employees exist at all. According to the show, tourism has

greatly increased to these secluded stations over the last decade or so, with tourists made up of a combination of railway enthusiasts and nature-lovers, along with more casual visitors interested in the novelty of such a spot. Regardless of their reasons, the majority of these secluded-station-seekers come from urban areas, with part of the appeal lying in the quietude afforded by these typically empty stops. (*Iida Tokimeki Trip*, 2014)

Both of these episodes emphasize the out-of-the-way nature of their chosen areas. Episode 3's rural village sticks to the more typical imagery associated with such places, showcasing an elderly farmer demonstrating tricks for cultivating on a steep hillside, and the intimate, personal experience of staying at a locally run inn. Episode 4's discussion of secluded stations plays into the preexisting idea that locations in the country can function as novel, beautiful pockets of solitude, temporary stops along the way to enjoyable experiences. In the end, as a tourism show, *Iida Tokimeki Trip* both contributes to the pervasive rural discourse within Japan, and brings this discourse and its associated ideas to international audiences through its availability on a streaming service like Crunchyroll.

Similarly, Tōei has seen an uptick in exposure due to the work of the so-called "Luga Limo[5]", a group of young women living in rural areas around Aichi Prefecture. Over the last few years, Kinjo Ai, one of the Luga Limo, has been living and working in the town, running a small bed-and-breakfast designed for either an individual or a couple, with the aim of delivering "authentic rural life" and experiences to young people from the city. This includes the opportunity for a day of "work experience" helping local, mostly elderly, farmers plant things like rice or other manual labor. Kinjo herself moved to Tōei

5 "Luga Limo" is *mori garu* backwards, meaning "Forest Girls".

from Tokyo as part of a program designed to give young people a few years' experience living in rural Japan. (Kinjo, Personal Interview, 2015)

Along with her bed and breakfast endeavor, though, Kinjo Ai has also hosted online videos exploring different facets of Tōei, in a way not too dissimilar from *Iida Tokimeki Trip*. Posted to YouTube, these videos position Tōei as a verdant, peaceful hamlet, rife with folksy-yet-incisive wisdom from elders and locals. Kinjo typically travels to points of interest in and around the town, highlighting recreational activities and spots an interested visitor might enjoy.

In the videos, Kinjo Ai dons an outfit evoking the image of a hiker. Indeed, this seems the intended affect, as the opening scene containing the other "Luga Limo" hosts sees all of the women switch instantaneously from stylish, casual street clothes (including skirts, blouses, and heeled shoes) to more outdoorsy, practical outfits (puffy vests, fleece sweaters, shorts, and boots) as they walk towards the camera, with the Nagoya TV Tower visible behind them. In each of the Luga Limo hosts' respective videos, the hosts wear outfits akin to Kinjo's, similalry engaging in outdoorsy pursuits and showcasing a variety of local things. (Ruga-Rimo Tsushin, "Chie...", 2013)

In one video, "Wisdom, 'Ai's Amazing Experience Route' Tōei-village[6]," Kinjo showcases a few areas she finds interesting around Tōei outside of the more well-known *Hanamatsuri* festival, including a wreath-making class using locally foraged foliage, a pottery and ceramics experience where one can get hands-on time with a pottery wheel from a professional ceramicist, and the preparation of a pre-packaged pizza in a rustic,

6 「知恵「金ちゃんのスゲェ体験ルート」東栄町」; Author's translation

outdoor brick oven. Each stop tries to trade on the appeal of local knowledge and wisdom, linking these with the rustic, nature-filled mountain scenery to encourage viewers to partake in these various activities. At the same time, the video tries to evoke reflection on the unique opportunity to seize these experiences, experiences offered only by these specific people in this specific place. (Ruga-Rimo Tsushin, "Chie...", 2013)

These two examples, *Iida Tokimeki Trip* and the *Luga Limo* videos, seem to incorporate many of the ideas and strategies for presenting and discussing the rural outlined in the earlier "Discover" and "Exotic" tourism campaigns. The first and perhaps most salient aspect is the use of young, female hosts to guide viewers into the hitherto unknown world of each respective town and all it contains. *Iida Tokimeki Trip* chooses a highly conspicuous "ambassador of cute," dressed in attention-grabbing street fashion, and incorporates a young, popular, non-Japanese male to emphasize the idea of otherness and discovery, articulating them with proximity to something "inherently" urban, tied into the identity and image of Kimura U.

In the *Luga Limo* video, Kinjo Ai wears youthful, sporty hiking attire, and plays up one's closeness to nature in the mountains of Tōei. While not marked as "fashionable," per se, the videos mark the attire as a conscious choice for the purpose of exploring the outdoors, denoted by the instantaneous transformation out of more stylish street clothes during the opening sequence. That a rural town be immediately considered and identified as *necessarily* more "outdoorsy" or demanding than an urban place like Nagoya further

reinforces the essential nature of Japan's rural areas as inherently different, requiring changes in order to visit it.

Where the videos diverge, however, comes from their overall aims. Where *Iida Tokimeki Trip* showcases fun stops and points of interest for visiting outsiders, the *Luga Limo* videos attempt to confer a bit more "insider" status, with the hosts, including Kinjo Ai, expressing familiarity with many of the activities and individuals covered. Kinjo's attire likewise differentiates her from both Kimura U and Benny. Kinjo's sporty, outdoorsy look suggests that one can access remote, rural Japan comfortably with a few adjustments, but also implies that these adjustments need to be made. On the other hand, Kimura U and Benny's clothing causes them to stick out as young and fashionable among the elderly locals in episode three, keeping them as "outsiders" on a transient exploration of the rural. Kinjo's coding as "closer" to the rural also seems to imply a more substantial change required to "become" rural.

Like the "Exotic Japan" poster campaign before them, however, these videos place young, stylish, urban-associated women in proximity to the rural, the traditional, the other. Rather than a collage of styles to be donned and discarded, the videos position these concepts as avenues of exploration and discovery, more in line with the "Discover Japan" campaign. (Ivy, 1988) At the same time, they attempt to promote local businesses and practices, tying in somewhat to the efforts of locality studies proponents. (Love, 2013) The distinction between "discover" and "exotic" seems to imply different levels of engagement. Ivy's characterization of the "Discover" posters positions them as deeply

engaging and possibly transformative, in contrast to the revolving door of novelty presented by “Exotic.” (Ivy, 1988) The *Iida* and *Luga Limo* videos also seem to differ in similar ways: Kimura U and Benny act as tourists passing through momentarily, experiencing noteworthy things in and around Iida. Kinjo Ai, on the other hand, emphasizes the affective appeal of “being” in the rural through experience and socialization.

These videos also subtly emphasize the ongoing articulation of the rural, traditional, and natural with girls, women, and femininity, especially in the case of the *Luga Limo* videos. (Ivy, 1995) Voice-over narration from Kinjo Ai repeatedly mentions the quiet, contemplative atmosphere offered by the natural scenery and mountain surrounding Tōei, moving into a calmer, more wistful tone, distinct from her more energetic commentary at other times. (Ruga-Rimo Tsushin, “Chie...,” 2013)

Iida Tokimeki Trip also underscores this connection in one scene: as morning rises after a night at a local, husband-and-wife-run *ryoukan,* the elderly husband goes out to greet the morning, facing the dewy valley from a cliff ledge, as the cresting sunlight drapes the green mountains in a soft orange glow. The elderly man begins to pray to the gods of the valley, which he apparently does every day, or so Kimura U informs the viewer through voiceover. Kimura U and Benny join him, placing their hands together and bowing in prayer along with him. Tellingly, the purpose of this man's actions and the meaning of his prayer are communicated by Kimura U through voiceover to the viewer,

rather than the directly from the man himself. (“Valley Where the Gods Come Down,” Crunchyroll, 2014)

In another similarity to the two tourism campaigns, these videos place their hosts in circumstances which tend to replicate, either explicitly or incidentally, everyday moments of locals' lived experiences. “Discover Japan” based its posters around the idea of candid, everyday moments captured singularly through photography, and those ideas echo through these videos. *Iida Tokimeki Trip* takes the opportunity to showcase the farming techniques of a local resident, juxtaposing the young, impractically dressed (at least for farming) Kimura U and Benny, as they attempt to navigate the loose dirt of a cultivated mountain hill while planting vegetables. During the stay at the inn, the two hosts gush about a freshly prepared local delicacy, extolling it as a unique dish found only in a place like the mountain inn. (Ibid)

Likewise, the *Luga Limo* videos use the host as a conduit through which the viewer can remotely witness everyday activities like farming, wreath-making, ceramics lessons, cooking, and star-gazing, if not arm them with the appropriate knowledge to visit these locales themselves. While Kinjo often injects reminders of the mountainous setting, the videos focus less on the telling than the showing of these things, except in the case of “local wisdom” offered by Kinjo's guests. The visual nature of this medium reiterates the affective and sensual linkages of the rural through a conflux of images, sounds, words, and montage. The additional experiential dimensions provided by moving images and sound enhances the affective components by engaging more senses.

During the summer of 2015, I had the chance to speak with the host of Tōei's *Luga Limo* videos, Kinjo Ai, about her experience living and working in the village of Tōei. Ms. Kinjo had moved to Tōei in 2013 from Tokyo, as part of a program designed to place young urbanites in the countryside around Japan, an opportunity she had learned about online. After applying and being accepted, she moved to Tōei for the purpose of understanding what she viewed as traditional and authentic ways of living in the land, ways she identified as "Japanese ways." (Kinjo, Personal Interview, 2015)

After moving to Tōei, Ms. Kinjo decided to open a small bed-and-breakfast accommodating one or two people, in an old, traditional Japanese house with a claimed age of around 100 years. This house served as our meeting place because the bed-and-breakfast had one customer to attend to, a man in his mid-to-late 30s. (Ibid)

Ms. Kinjo's reasons for making the move to Tōei included the "chance to be close to beautiful nature," a desire to broaden her understanding of Japan by experiencing everyday rural life, to strengthen her own sense of "Japanese-ness" by seeing and doing things that were "uniquely Japanese," and to solidify her sense of "what makes Japan" by traveling to out-of-the-way and lesser known parts of it. Her experiences had been largely positive. (Ibid)

Through her positive experiences, Ms. Kinjo conceived of the idea of opening a place for other people to see and participate in everyday rural life, but without the burden of a long-term move and commitment. Though mainly targeted at young Japanese people,

the house accepted most any visitors that applied. Ms. Kinjo wanted to offer the same opportunities, experiences, and connections she'd found to others curious about the countryside, and felt that these sorts of experiences were vitally important to developing a fuller understanding of "what it means to be Japanese." (Ibid)

Stays typically ran between three days and a full week, with the ability to place reservations online or by phone. (Danon Website, 2015) Along with the chance to tour the area, shop locally, and meet local residents, one's stay could include a day-long work-experience, involving agricultural work alongside local farmers performing tasks such as planting and harvesting rice, clearing and working fields, picking fruits and vegetables, among other potential activities. (Kinjo, 2015) Through these work experiences, Ms. Kinjo wanted people to gain an appreciation for where and how the Japanese people produce food, the other ways of living that exist outside urban centers like Tokyo and Nagoya, and to build an individual's sense of the importance of local community through exposure to smaller, more intimate environments like Tōei. (Ibid)

Despite her experiences and business, Ms. Kinjo said she did not plan to stay in Tōei or other rural areas indefinitely. Eventually, she wanted to move back to Tokyo, but she expressed her feeling that Tōei and other villages like it would make good places to move to once she grew into late-middle age. (Ibid)

Ms. Kinjo's circumstances seemed similar to the recent "I-turn" phenomenon, a term related to the earlier "U-turn" seen in the 80s and 90s. In a typical "I-turn" (which consists of no actual turn at all), adults leave the city where they were born and grew up

for the rural countryside. Reasons vary, but most cite the desire to be closer to nature or to find greater tranquility. (Hoffman, 2014) The earlier “U-turn” phenomenon involved those migrating to the cities from the countryside returning to either their hometown or some part of the rural countryside. Again, reasons tended to skew towards peace and relaxation away from city life. (Goozner, 1992)

Regardless, Ms. Kinjo's path differs in her desire to return to the city after her time in Tōei, even though she expresses the possibility of return later in life. Her “rural life experience” undertaking also differs in that it appears to offer a much shorter, temporary form of I or U turn, allowing urban individuals to get a brief taste of rural life, perhaps as a way to decompress without totally abandoning the city.

In examining Ms. Kinjo's business, connections can be drawn to other attempts to encourage business and tourism without burdening governments. The circumstances around the varied attempts to invigorate Tōei and ameliorate the effects of population decline and economic stagnation mirror some of those covered by Christopher Thompson in rural Tohoku, where he notes that “...the administrative support and financial aid for grassroots level heritage preservation [in farming municipalities], once available through the local town hall, must now be supplemented significantly (and in some cases replaced altogether) by local residents.” (Thompson, 2006) Ms. Kinjo's business and her placement in the *Luga Limo* videos seems confirm this turn to grassroots efforts to promote the rural, whatever the reasons.

However, these varied attempts to capture and provide the experience of rural living perhaps unknowingly contribute to the creation of these "vanishing" feelings described by Marilyn Ivy. (Ivy, 1995) The continued interest in local tourism, folklore and heritage, traditions and customs, and life outside of claustrophobic, de-natured urban centers contributes to the "culture industries" that drive shows like *Iida Tokimeki Trip* and the *Luga Limo* video series, as well as Kinjo Ai's experiential bed-and-breakfast business. As Ivy points out, mass media, now bolstered by newer, more ubiquitous and slightly more pluralistic access through the internet, continues to exacerbate these feelings, compounding the sense of "vanishing," even as representation comes more often. The conditions of economic and cultural stability in Japan have continued to erode since the 1980s, and alongside it people's sense of anxiety and precarity have only grown. (Love, 2013)

As Robertson identified, national and local governments, activists, and citizens worked to "exploit the ubiquity of *furusato*" along with mass media, imbuing it with a multitude of affective valences, and accreting images of nature, village, and tradition. (Robertson, 1988) Love discusses the ways in which locality studies has followed a similar course, with outside parties employing the term to further ideas and agendas not necessarily commensurate with the actual interests of those the term supposedly represents. (Love, 2013) Through these analyses, a shift in strategies, rather than a change or abandonment of them, becomes apparent. Starting with "Discover," moving to "Exotic," both centered around *furusato,* domestic Otherness, and external support,

discourse shifts slowly to "locality studies" and decentralized self-sustainability, moving popular understanding along with it.

Returning to Thompson and Traphagan's point about the thinness of boundary between urban and rural in a practical sense, advances in information technology would further seem to mitigate this divide, at least in terms of virtual experience and exposure. The availability of programs like *Iida Tokimeki Trip* and easily findable video series like *Luga Limo* attest to this. However, media advertising the rural, from the *Discover* and *Exotic* campaigns to personal videos and photos documenting trips to remote areas, emphasize the perceived gap that exists between urban and rural experiences. Rather than a difference in *actual* places and things, (the presence of factories, roads, and school, or availability of contemporary entertainment, and media, for example) the divide between urban and rural seems pushed further into an abstract understanding of what constitutes an idealized rural setting, reified and reiterated in media and discourse, and differentiated from an equally nebulous urban one. By tying the rural to real features like mountains, fields, rivers, and farmland, these physical signifiers come to stand in for "the rural" in totality, maintaining a divide based on affect rather than physical materials.

In these examples, tradition, heritage, nature, and the feminine become conflated with anxieties about the future, stemming from affects of uncertainty and apprehension relating to the nation-state as permanent and meaningful. Ironically, by forging popular conception of "the rural" with non-specific physical features and characteristics, these objects becomes anchors for affective engagement with abstractions, despite their

connection to physical things. Not unlike intangible cultural heritage as a list inscription, they become recontextualized through association. Furthermore, this linkage to a romanticized, abstracted “rural” has the potential to compound feelings of precarity by juxtaposing this idealized, non-real rural conception against a reality which seems to deny it.

Chapter Three: Precarity and Affect in Circulation

Currently, Japan faces a number of social issues which affect the most marginalized individuals of society to a greater degree than others. This chapter focuses on problems surrounding rural areas and their cultural heritage, which arise from the declining birth rates, aging populations, and rural depopulation that have become the norm throughout much of Japan's countryside. At the moment, one of the most pressing social issues for people located in rural areas is the issue of cultural heritage preservation and continuation. Likewise, preservation of the towns or villages themselves is a major concern tied to cultural preservation in several ways. By seeking external designations for local customs, festivals, religious rituals, arts-and-crafts, and other forms of cultural heritage, the people in these places hope to combat their seemingly dire economic and cultural situations, even if the impact is minimal. I argue in this chapter that these designations carry not only international prestige, attendant colonialist underpinnings, and the possibility of economic turnaround, but also the accreted affects inherent in ICH-making and designation. By virtue of their international status, designated pieces of UNESCO ICH also act as particularly potent circulators of affect.

Precarity and affect structure much of my analysis in this chapter. I argue that precarity functions as a catalyst for affective engagement with culture, place, and identity. The majority of the conception of precarity within this chapter stems from Anne Allison's *Precarious Japan,* in which Allison investigates the increasingly precarious position of a

majority of Japanese people and their living and working situations (Allison, 2013). While her research project is focused on precarious labor, this paper argues that precarity can be extended to include things like "culture" and "heritage." Discourse on the "disappearance" of culture and heritage links to affectively inflected ideas of nation, home, and belonging, and ties them into an aspect of identity construction rooted in the past and tinged with nostalgia, trying to coexist within individuals alongside "modernity." (Ivy, 1995) Arguably, rural Japanese towns and villages themselves also face a precarious existence as their economies and populations decline, a problem rendered largely invisible by urban parochialism and the discourse-driven elision of these issues' immediate effects, arising from a narrative painting these negative effects as problems that will occur soon rather than problems in progress.

My conception of affect is a continuation of the work originally explored by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in their work, *A Thousand Plateaus*, and since further expanded upon in countless other works in the humanities and social sciences. By "affect," I mean immediate, visceral reactions, unmediated by intellectual thought and distinct from emotion. Affect is experiential, felt through and by the body, but is not bound necessarily to bodily sensation alone. Affect can come from any number of sources, from the taste and smell of food, to the sound of a city, to memories, to pictures, to repeated actions or familiar habits. (Mankekar, 2015)

The circulation of affect, as conceptualized and analyzed in Purnima Mankekar's *Unsettling India*, forms another important foundation of this chapter. In her work,

Mankekar analyzes the ways in which affect circulates among Indian people, particularly in the Indian diaspora, examining sites and objects including Indian grocery stores, movie theaters, films, and music. Through affective experiences and engagements, individuals construct an Indian diasporic identity, (re)configured and reinforced through socialization, even despite the large disparities among individuals. Mankekar tries to dissect this construction of identity by analyzing the circulation of affect. Through the circulation of people, places, ideas, and things, affect circulates and reconfigures itself continually, having no real place of origin and accreting continually as it moves. (Mankekar, 2015) One key question to bear in mind throughout this chapter is this: What affects do Japanese rural communities generate through their sense of precarity?

As discussed briefly in the previous two chapters, recent years have seen Japanese public consciousness turned increasingly towards looming population issues, with the most important typically considered the declining birth rate and aging population. Over the last two decades or so, Japan's population has seen a steady decrease in the number of children born, along with a decrease in the number of people marrying, as well as a tendency for people to begin marrying later and later in life. These late-life marriage couples often choose not to have children. Along with birth rate decline, Japan faces a population whose average age continues to rise. As the number of babies, children, and young adults decrease with each generation, those joining the ranks of “middle-aged” and “elderly” (and generally aging) increase, exacerbated slightly by Japan's long average lifespan. The elderly in Japan don't live forever, however, and eventually they, too,

decrease in number, until the total projected population of Japan begins to see decreases in all areas. ("The incredible shrinking country," 2014) The reasons for these changes are numerous, but the trends are not unique to Japan. Around the world, similar situations have arisen in countries such as Germany, Russia, Sweden, and Denmark, among others.

Along with concerns about the continuation of the Japanese people and nation come concerns about the continuation of Japanese culture. (Personal interviews, 2015) "Traditional" culture and heritage form the group most likely to be hard-hit by the population problems, as fewer and fewer people exist to continue traditions or even to pass them on in the first place.

Japanese people have taken notice of these imminent threats. In Tōei, *Hanamatsuri* faces increasing pressure from a number of different sides. The local government depends on the festival to increase tourism to the town by promoting its unique experiential nature as a local festival only found in that small region. Likewise, shop owners rely on the increased business from both other townspeople and those passing through to see the festivities. (Ibid) The festival itself constitutes a locus of interpersonal socialization and community bonding, and provides a break for the people to "cut loose" and enjoy themselves in public. The children buzz with excitement in the weeks and days preceding the festival, and many were directly involved in the dances and rituals performed.

However, many people I knew voiced concerns about the continuation and preservation of this ritual, a ritual they had participated in or observed for years, either

since moving to the town or as townspeople growing up there. (Personal interview, 2015) The possibility of its disappearance as a result of depopulation felt imminent for these people, and they acknowledged the festival's importance to the local economy. When speaking to me about this, many of my friends and acquaintances in the town had a resigned air, a sense that the dismal future of the town and the eventual disappearance of the festival were already a foregone conclusion. Few of them saw options other than further promotion of the festival as a desirable tourist destination for nearby cities like Toyohashi and Nagoya. *Hanamatsuri*'s future was often talked about as if it hung on the edge of obscurity. In retrospect, this situation appears precarious. (Personal interviews, 2015)

As mentioned, Anne Allison's work covers social and labor precarity. But increasingly, I argue, towns and villages face a distinct (though related form of precarity. In Allison's conception, key factors in creating the feeling of precariousness are invisibility, insecurity, helplessness, and uncertainty. (Allison, 2013) Many of these characteristics surely apply to rural villages around the world, and to Japanese villages in particular, whose population issues compound preexisting infrastructural problems and lingering fallout from the collapse of the Japanese economy in the early 1990s. Tōei itself was a lumber boomtown, finding its greatest success in the 1970s and 1980s, but since the end of Japan's "economic miracle" relied on tourism to support its economy after the lumber industry declined. Most people in the town see their plight as solely their own, with few outside of the area recognizing the urgency they feel, seeing only (and often

only momentarily) the dilapidation and disrepair into which unused buildings and under-used roads have fallen. (Personal Interview, 2015) To visitors, the town appears a quaint, ephemeral curiosity. For Japan's urban population, these problems are basically invisible.

For these reasons, it is easy to see why rural places and people feel the effects of population problems much more acutely than most urban individuals. However, the stakes go beyond sustaining the town and its traditions. Both the contemporary concerns of continuity and the preservation of Japan's "traditional past" inform the discourse surrounding cultural heritage around the nation. These conceptions of "tradition" and cultural heritage are also colored by people's affective engagement with such objects and ideas, with "tradition" holding particular power for many older Japanese individuals. But how is "tradition" defined in Japanese society?

The idea of an essentialized, "traditional" Japanese past comes from modernity theory, and the folk and folklore aspect was largely the work of Yanagita Kunio[7] and his research in the field of *minzokugaku*, or Japanese folklore. In the 1910s and 1920s, Yanagita traveled around Japan collecting stories from rural areas about *yokai* (Japanese monsters), festivals, and rituals from residents of these rural areas. (Foster, 2009) Eventually, Yanagita and other folklorists and ethnologists created the dominant image of the "original" Japanese individual and the traditional circumstances surrounding their everyday life. (Mitsuru, "Chiho: Yanagita Kunio's 'Japan,'" 1998)

This essentialization worked in both directions. *Nihonjinron*, translating to something like "discussions concerning essential Japaneseness," was a term that gained

7 Discussed in more depth in Chapter 2

great currency in Japan immediately following World War II. (Befu, 2001) Similar to *minzokugaku*, *Nihonjinron* focused on identifying the characteristics—intellectual, cultural, traditional, social, among others—of Japanese character particular to the Japanese as a people. In this case, however, *Nihonjinron* also emphasized any characteristics which separated the Japanese people from "everyone else," especially Europe and the United States.

Japan's project of self-essentialization succeeded in creating not only an internal image of homogeneity and national unity, but in projecting this image abroad. Some of this stems from earlier academic and anthropological work, mainly Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, published in 1946, developed from research by Benedict on Japanese character and behavior to aid the United States military during World War II. (Lie, 2001) As Marilyn Ivy points out, the dominant discourse of the Japanese as studious, industrious "assimilators," tight-knit and "tribal" in their homogeneity, is one that has held steady in the minds of people inside and outside Japan. (Ivy, 1995) In part, this comes from Japan's apparent technological and industrial expertise and superiority during the 1970s and 1980s, leading many Western companies and businesses to seek out and implement the "Japanese model" as their own, in an attempt to capture the structure and character deemed responsible for Japan's increased position as an international power. But the Japanese themselves also bear a particular responsibility in this ongoing project of essentialization.

In addition to *minzokugagku*, Japanese museums also had an important role in this nation-state building project, with government-funded museums erected to house both "national treasures," "traditional history," and other exhibitions deemed useful in educating the general public about a linear, unchanging, essentialized Japanese past leading to the current "Japanese nation." Museums continued to play an important part in establishing a "national Japanese past" and in displaying the nation's "evolution" from tradition to modernity, collecting antiquities and objects with historical detail and perspective filled in later. In collecting objects for museums, emphasis was placed on anything "of great age," regardless of use or value. (Aso, 2011).

"World's Fairs" formed another early and important piece of this overall project. As Noriko Aso demonstrates in *Public Properties***,** Japan's entries into World's Fairs provided a platform from which the Japanese could attempt to demonstrate their parity with the much more "developed" Western countries and powers, the basis for their own attempts at development. More than just displays of their technical, social, and scientific accomplishments, they functioned as arenas for othering nearby East Asian countries, including China, Korea, Taiwan, and Mongolia, to establish the typical modernity hierarchy, obviously placing themselves above these other cultures and countries. In utilizing these exhibitions to display their colonial accomplishments and ambitions, the Japanese further reinforced their separation from "other" East Asian countries and peoples, using the cover of "science" and "progress" to veil their machinations with legitimacy. (Aso, 2011)

This new, “modern” focus on science as the means to progress and competitiveness was a common refrain among modernizing nation-states at the turn of the century, and Japan was no exception. Museums, popular exhibitions like the World's Fairs, and the more academic collection, categorization, and analysis of folk practices and folklore in *minzokugaku* all stood as significant examples in Japanese society of using science to rationalize the current state of the Japanese nation. To heighten this progression, “traditional Japan” needed first to be defined, then contrasted with the new, modern nation. This scientific logic also provided an integral component for creating the narrative of homogeneity and essentialism pervading the public consciousness. Miriam Silverberg examines how this scientific logic spread to women's magazines and product advertisements as a way of legitimizing the placement of women as the sole keepers of the domestic sphere in home life in the 1920s. As she shows, the mass print culture of the time was saturated with images, articles, and editorials constructing an image of the idealized, responsible Japanese-citizen-housewife. (Silverberg, 2006) This is all to show that the project of creating and defining “essential Japaneseness” is an endeavor with a lengthy history. As discussed in chapter two, the rural has long been essentialized as the nearby-yet-different cradle of Japanese tradition and culture. More recently, Japan has found ways to brand and promote culture through designations of “Intangible Cultural Properties,” further adding to this long-term project.

In the 1950s, Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs began a system of “cultural heritage” designation, passing the “Enactment of the Law for the Protection of Cultural

Properties," which has been amended several times since its adoption. This law set up a national system for the recognition, designation, and preservation of objects deemed as either "important tangible cultural properties" or "important intangible cultural properties." This law and its amendments follow from older preservation laws dating back to the Meiji Period in 1871. ("Cultural Properties", 2015)

As discussed in chapter one, "folk practices" qualify as "intangible cultural properties" when applied to religious practice, festivals, rituals, dances, and other "folk" customs or culture. Tōei's own *Hanamatsuri* would fall under this category were it ever to seek this recognition from the Japanese government. There are a number of reasons it might, most of which come from the aforementioned population problems facing Japan. (Foster, 2011)

Indeed, a large number of people, places, and things sought these designations or registered for recognition from the Japanese government. Along with governmental benefits and increased protection, the designation conferred national prestige and elevated recognized practices and sites to a level of importance many felt somewhat entitled to by virtue of their lineage and longevity. (McGuire, 2013) Like the UNESCO designation that would eventually come to supersede it, Japan's own internal designations and laws for cultural, historical, and folk heritage preservation increased tourist traffic and brand value for designees, along with imbuing within them a sense of "Japanese national pride" as a part their own nation's long, important—and now protected—culture and traditions. Recently, however, most places in Japan seeking such recognition for their

"intangible cultural heritage" have turned towards a new benefactor and designator: UNESCO. (Ibid)

UNESCO's designations include "World Heritage Sites" and "Intangible Cultural Heritage." World Heritage Sites are places deemed culturally and historically important by UNESCO, and include buildings, forests, bodies of water, castles, and any other "site" meeting their criteria, similar to the Japanese designation. Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) encompasses aspects of "culture" and "cultural heritage" that are "intangible," similar to the idea of "intangibility" in the Japanese designation, and can include things such as performance, craft techniques, rituals, festivals, and other such "cultural properties." According to UNESCO's website, Intangible Culture is: "Traditional, contemporary and living at the same time: intangible cultural heritage does not only represent inherited traditions from the past but also contemporary rural and urban practices in which diverse cultural groups take part.[8]" (UNESCO, 2015)

UNESCO also states that they view cultural heritage as "representative" and "inclusive," meaning that it does not discriminate about what practices, places, or people qualify; these designations are meant to represent people and communities without commodifying them. Lastly, UNESCO states that it is "community-based," and that "intangible cultural heritage can only be heritage when it is recognized as such by the communities, groups, or individuals that create, maintain, and transmit it...." (UNESCO, 2015)

8 For more information regarding UNESCO and intangible cultural heritage as a designation, please see Chapter Two.

Japan's own role in the creation of the “Intangible Cultural Heritage” designation cannot be overlooked[9]. According to Mark Patrick McGuire, “in 2001, UNESCO Secretary-General Matsuura Kōichirō announced the 'First Proclamation of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity,” stating that the mission was critical to the preservation and promotion of culture and peace. McGuire goes on to say that the “...shift in emphasis toward intangible heritage bears the distinct imprint of the Japanese domestic cultural property legislation.” This surprises him little, as he notes that Japan is UNESCO's “second largest financial backer behind the United States.” (McGuire, 2013)

According to McGuire, many of the reasons designation seekers in Japan have changed their preference to the UNESCO designation relate to the problems currently facing the Japanese population, but these are not the only motivating factors. The economic benefits for local areas are among the top reasons for pursuing ICH status, which many rural Japanese people feel carries a greater level of benefits than that ostensibly afforded by Japan's own designation system. Increased tourism, higher recognition levels, and national identity all figure into this change in designation-seeking. Additionally, the similarities with Japan's own designation system makes translating the designation's relationship to the site or piece of culture itself easier to navigate, at least nominally. (Ibid)

Another important reason for seeking the UNESCO designation rather than the domestic one stems from a perceived elevation of the ICH to “international” status, which

9 For more in depth discussion of the creation of Japan's role in the creation of the “intangible cultural heritage” designation, please see Chatper Two

also appeals internally to national Japanese sensibilities. According to McGuire, Secretary-General Harasawa Kenta of UNESCO's Nikko branch, located in Tochigi Prefecture, “likens World Heritage Status to the Michelin Five Star Rating or the equivalent to conspicuous brand-name goods like Luis Vuitton or Prada....” McGuire also notes that one designation seeker, *Shugendo* religious practitioner Tanaka Riten, “...has stated his hope that the UNESCO designation will boost Kumano residents' sense of regional identity and impress upon all Japanese the value of a formerly proscribed combinatory tradition's distinct religious heritage,” in regards to attempts by the *Shugendo* religion in Japan to obtain UNESCO ICH status for its religious practices and sacred mountains. (Ibid)

While these benefits may indeed happen over time and in part because of the ICH designation's influence, UNESCO itself does not provide any money. Likewise, as Michael Dylan Foster notes, some people ostensibly involved in the process of registration and designation, “...felt somewhat disconnected from the entire process....although [island officials] had been awaiting [UNESCO's] decision, they only realized it was official when a newspaper from the mainland called to ask how they felt about [the designation].” (Foster, 2011) Foster highlights a degree of remove displayed by designating entities from the actual seekers and practitioners not immediately obvious to those seeking UNESCO recognition.

While there are definite benefits to obtaining these designations, they also come with significant downsides in some cases. For example, McGuire talks about one area's

problems surrounding the designation of a sacred mountain in the Japanese countryside, Mount Omine, in his article “What's at Stake in Designating Japan's Sacred Mountains as UNESCO World Heritage Sites?” While tourism to the area increased, local, national, and international authorities charged with caring for the site seemed to focus solely on the care of site itself and to areas directly connected to it as main avenues for tourism. Infrastructure too far afield of the designated site was left in a much greater state of disrepair, which was an initial reason for the locals to seek the designation in the first place. McGuire highlights this exceptionally well in an event where flooding destroyed roads and buildings, only some of which the town quickly cleaned and rebuilt, and only because they were close to the designated ICH. Because these areas would likely see high traffic from tourists, they were given priority over other affected areas; other roads were left badly damaged and littered with debris and rocks, causing one child to injure themselves on their bike ride to school. Similarly, McGuire highlights the potential pitfalls of increased tourism and its effects on the sites themselves. “The resultant tourist deluge has made some sites more endangered than if they had never been designated....On tiny Yakushima island, for example, hordes of day-trippers have trampled the exposed roots of sacred cryptomeria trees....” (McGuire, 2013)

Other negatives exist, as well. One major criticism leveled at the UNESCO designation is the potential for “cultural stagnation,” as the designation requires the cultural practice remain the same after its designation, to maintain its recognition by UNESCO. In other words, once something is designated, it must be performed, practiced,

recited, or exhibited in the same way as when the designation was first received. Ideally, this "preserves" the heritage, maintains it as "tradition." (Foster, 2011) However, cultural practices still currently *practiced*—for example, local religious rituals—lose their ability to change over time. Practitioners must establish and follow strict guidelines to maintain the "integrity" of the practice and assure their continued recognition by UNESCO. (Ibid) In many ways, this is not unlike a living museum exhibit, where the objects on display are kept in stasis under lock-and-key to preserve and protect them. Like a museum, the ICH exists as something static to observe, not something living in the world.

McGuire points to the enforcement of "cultural orthodoxy" in these practices. Recognized pieces of ICH come to dominate the discourse surrounding cultural heritage and Japanese culture in general, creating a prestigious "privileged elite" that see the benefits of this international designation, creating a hierarchy which leaves unrecognized ICH wanting. Such designations can also exacerbate internal disputes about "legitimate" practice, further reinforcing ideas of cultural orthodoxy, resulting in competition to land the first designation and position oneself as an "originary" or "true" culture fit for heritability, especially in cases of competing practices in close proximity. (McGuire, 2013)

I heard similar anxieties expressed about *Hanamatsuri*. Because several different festivals takes place in villages and towns around Tōei, tensions exist regarding the provenance of the practices, as well as local pride about the "best" version. (Personal interview, 2015) Because of these tensions, several people expressed their belief that

attempting to obtain the ICH designation from UNESCO would cause more discord than unity among the various festivals and villages. (Personal Interviews, 2015)

While people attempting to obtain these UNESCO designations might not be aware of the potential negatives, or the ways in which their visions of the benefits might differ from reality, it's unlikely they are completely ignorant to the effects these designations have had on other places. As Foster points out, some places are fine with the state of "suspended-animation" placed on their rituals (Foster, 2011). Likewise, some might feel that the potential economic benefits greatly outweigh any negatives related to the myopic focus on the sites or ICH themselves. So what other reasons might people have for the seeking of these designations in Japan?

One likely reason could be traced to affects surrounding these potential pieces of ICH. Much of this affect can likely be linked to *furusato*[10], which translates roughly to "hometown," but carries deeper connotations as the place of one's birth, and an original, real home, back to where one's "roots" can ultimately be traced. (Robertson, 1988) Nostalgia and longing heavily tinge the color of *furusato's* affect. This "home" prefigures an essentialized idea of the place from which all Japanese people originate. (Ivy, 1995) *Furusato* is, seemingly, a rationalization for affective ties to some essentialized, imagined past, part of the ongoing national project of crafting a core "Japanese identity," and creating a narrative of continuity from some imagined and shared past. Evoking these constructed images and memories of "the past" and tradition, linking them to national

10 For greater clarification of *furusato*, please see Chapter Two

identity, and encoding them with an essentialized “Japanese-ness” forms a pervasive, permeating affective engagement with both individual and national “history.”

Do these affective ties to a nostalgic, traditional, bygone past affect interpretations and readings of “cultural heritage?” The answers seems likely to be yes. The idea of “traditional vs. modern” in modernity theory itself relies on notions derived from affective feelings of an “other” and “primitive” past contrasted against this modernity. The Japanese nation-state has long engaged in this project to prove both its modernity and competitiveness, while espousing its ever-lasting “traditional” past, a past which stays the same at the core of the Japanese people throughout time, a solid bedrock on which to build uncertain futures. As Marilyn Ivy puts it:

> Japan emerges as the armature of intense preoccupations with essential national-cultural identity, continuity, and community that mark and remark it with the signs of totality. The effort to sustain this totality announces itself in every tourist advertisement, every appeal to “home” (furusato), every assertion that “we Japanese are modern, but we have kept our tradition,” every discourse on public (Japanese) harmony...There is [a]...necessity to come to terms with what is a powerfully normalizing and standardizing nexus of institutional, legal, and socio-cultural apparatuses. (Ivy, 1995, p. 26)

This totalization results in a complex internal and external circulation of nostalgic and nationalistic affect, tied to an essential “Japanese national identity” that masks underlying problems and differences to support an ideal of “harmony” often found to be lacking upon closer inspection. The concerns surrounding UNESCO and the Japanese government's designations are examples of the problems overlooked in the race to imbricate culture, past, identity, and aspiration.

How do precarity and affect relate to each other? The state of precarity is a highly affective one. As Allison discusses, the feelings that saturate a person form almost into a tangible mass of internal feeling and emotion. These feelings of helplessness, invisibility, insecurity, and uncertainty compound each other. (Allison, 2013) These affective feelings circulate. It does not seem unlikely that the feelings rooted in precarity could translate to other things, things like one's hometown, past, and future. In this way, individual precarity has the potential to reconfigure a person's sense of the world around them into something more unstable and precarious than before. These feelings might also transfer, might circulate, and in turn cause others to view these places, objects, and people through a similar affective lens received from outside themselves.

In many ways, these affective feelings arising from precarity greatly contribute to the ongoing nation-state project of constructing Japanese national identity. If precarious areas feel that their only recourse for aid is through increased economic benefits conferred by an external, international agency determining sites and instances of "cultural heritage," a form of essentialization and othering occurs that feeds back into the consciousness and awareness of the general public of the nation. This deferral to another power to determine what qualifies as "important culture" reifies through establishment and precedent these notions in the first place.

Given the importance and strong affective ties to the idea of *furusato*, these reactions to the perceived threats accompanying precarity do not surprise. Allison notes that one reaction some precarious individuals have is to seek "community" and "identity"

through large groups that accept them or that make them feel like participants. In many cases, this comes in the form of highly conservative, right-wing political groups. (Allison, 2013) Precarity evokes strong negative affective reactions within the individual, and it seems likely that comparably strong positive ones often become a refuge for the precarious. Similarly, tying one's community, customs, and locality back into national identity works to reinforce the idea of the nation-state narrative based in affective connection to national symbols and the like.

But where does affect originate for "intangible cultural heritage?" According to Mankekar, affect does not really originate anywhere. Affect is not created: it simply continues its journey. (Mankekar, 2015) Cultural practices, religious rituals, sacred sites —these all contain and evoke strong affective reactions for the individuals closest to them. But they themselves do not originate this affect. The individuals practicing and partaking bring their own affects, values, and meanings, and embed them within these objects, sites, and practices. So, rather than asking where affect originates, a more productive question might be this: what or who mediates affective engagement with intangible cultural heritage? The answer to this question generates a long, essentially unending list: UNESCO itself, the national Japanese public, the Japanese government, the local people around the cultural heritage, the heritage itself, the practitioners of the heritage, national tourists, international tourists, academics, politicians—the affect arises and passes, moving in and through these object, bodies, places, and organizations, tinging

them with the ideas, conceptions, and affects of those it touches, gathering and producing greater affect the longer and further it travels.

This process became clear to me while observing *Hanamtsuri* and speaking with locals about the festival and town. The local government and citizens placed a strong focus on promoting the festival as a unique slice of Japanese culture, found only in that particular region, in the hopes of encouraging domestic tourism. One of their most strongly emphasized points was the idea of a direct connection to the ancient past of not only rural Japan, but the nation as a whole, embodied in the annual celebration of *Hanamatsuri*. For some of the people I talked with, *Hanamatsuri* became not only a space for relaxation, celebration, and socialization, but a place to connect with a shared national past. (Personal Interviews, 2015) Through its function as a social locus, this shared sense of connection might spread to others in the way Mankekar describes. (Mankekar, 2015) The festival itself came rife with triggers for sense-memory based affective engagement: smoke, temperature, food, drink, sounds, chants, colors, friends, among many other things. Reminders of the festival were reminders of precarity, transporting individuals back to the myriad affects associated with sensual stimuli.

In the weeks leading up to *Hanamatsuri,* anticipation grows, with many in the community involved in preparations. It's not hard to imagine a growing sense of anxiety about festival's future just below the surface, however, especially among the older participants. It's also not hard to imagine these fears filtering down to the children and young adults tasked with performing some of the dances, apprehending precarity from

the adults alongside them or even from their own parents. Do these individuals then transmit some of this precariousness into the festival's proceedings? Do the children and young adults carry these affects of precarity with them when they move away from the town for school and work? If affect circulates, these are the people who would circulate it.

This circulation of affect is a complicated process. Arjun Appadurai discusses the idea of various "-scapes", and how they form a complex, fluid, interacting, and layered aether that pervades and informs globalization in the contemporary world. All of the forces behind the scenes of globalization—finance, technology, socialization, mobility—contribute to and constitute this aether. Rather than continue in a vein of analysis that elides the complicated processes behind systems and their interactions, Appadurai hopes to elucidate their complex interactions through these "scapes." (Appadurai, 2006) Affect can easily fit into the field of these scapes, and its circulation likewise results from an equally complex set of interactions as it moves from place-to-place, person-to-person, object-to-person, and everything in between. Affect is mediated not only by human rationalization and intellect or by objects and places, but also by its very movement between things, where it transforms and alters itself, those experiencing it, and the objects eliciting it.

In this way, the circulation of affect through UNESCO World Heritage Sites, ICH, and Japan's own designated objects, practices, and people can be examined within the broader context of globalization, history, politics, and national identity. Likewise, the

strong affective ties evoked by these ICH objects and "World Heritage Sites" plays out on both national and international stages. The seeking of these designations stems from affective reactions to precarity, the choice to use UNESCO likewise comes from a combination of affective engagement with the ideas of "the international," of "national identity," and often from the desire to protect or preserve not only one's "cultural heritage," but one's *furusato*.

UNESCO itself bears responsibility for its totalizing narratives about "cultural heritage" and how this discourse elides greater diversity and complicated issues within not only the countries earning these designations, but even the localities, peoples, and practices themselves. UNESCO's culpability can remain hidden behind humanistic messages playing on normative and hegemonic narratives of peace, stability, and progress, while conferring elite and desirable statuses to vulnerable areas and people, at the same time maintaining their hegemony and image as an institution at the top of some international prestige pecking order. While the overall aims of UNESCO's stated mission may ultimately be reasonable and well-intentioned, their actions must be placed in context and dialogue with the things they influence. As it stands, UNESCO functions similarly to—and sometimes mainly as—globalizing forces that contribute to the commodification of ICH. Because UNESCO's designations *espouse* good, in their (and many others') estimations, they *are* good, or so their narrative and discoursal logic would have you believe. But hopefully as this chapter has demonstrated, this doesn't necessarily hold true.

This disparity between stated mission, actions, and consequences feeds back into the affective relationships revolving around World Heritage Sites and ICH. This commodification contributes to the feelings of precarity experienced by at-risk individuals and communities, who move from the insecurity and uncertainty of preservation to the insecurity and uncertainty of maintenance, while the precariousness itself remains. At best, the worst outcomes have only been delayed. ICH designation creates the same ideas about flexibility, utility, and cost-benefit surrounding other "cultural goods" and products, becoming for some a disposable curiosity to consume and eventually leave behind.

UNESCO's cultural designations, along with the Japanese government's own designation system, contributes significantly to fraught and complex internal and international systems that ostensibly salvage culture from precarious situations, but end up further complicating them. While supposedly a force for recognition and preservation, ICH designation also renders invisible issues that might challenge UNESCO's stated goals and complicate the conception of "cultural heritage." The project not only totalizes and disguises differences—ethnic, cultural, political, religious—it ties this totalization affectively to strong sensations of nostalgia and longing. The pull of the essentialized rural—of *furusato*—overrides the truth of incongruity and elides the forces at work around those people most affected by this precarity, globalization, commodification, and circulation.

Affect circulates, and this circulation never rests. Affect is neutral, but people feel affect, and people react and decide. Precarity in its many forms gives rise to strong affective reactions that mediate relationships with people, places, and things, including cultural heritage. Cultural preservation and continuation is a pressing issue for many people the world over, but especially in vulnerable and precarious rural areas like the town of Tōei in Japan. However, the paths to accessing tools, funds, and infrastructure for this preservation continue to be guided by damaging normative and hegemonic conceptions of culture, relying on affective engagements with past and tradition to function.

Conclusion

Japan is a nation in cultural crisis. Precariousness dominates the affective landscape in numerous areas, from economics, to industry, to population, to cultural heritage. Though some strategies appear to have been devised to preserve cultural heritage and assuage societal anxieties, they cannot really address the greater underlying problems related to population decline, demographics, and public interest in their current form. Despite ICH's appeal, its long-term utility becomes questionable given the issues it might invite, issues like increased precarity, orientalist exoticism, and narrow revitalization. Strategies like ICH recognition have the potential to damage as much as they help, as this paper has hopefully shown.

UNESCO remains a powerful force in the recognition and understanding of culture and heritage around the world. All of their curated lists, World Heritage, Natural Heritage, and Intangible Cultural Heritage, come with the implicit effects associated with listing, from decontextualizing and recontextualizing the items on the list, to presenting a hierarchy even when none is implied, among other things. Additionally, the very moniker "cultural heritage" and its association with "traditions" and "threat" imbue the designees (and likewise those seeking designations) with the discoursal baggage of preservation ideas rooted in colonialism. These have the potential effect of reifying conceptions circulated by the dominant heritage discourse and reinforcing Orientalist views both

domestically and internationally of the people, places, and things identified as ICH, coloring other things through proximity.

This circulation has strong affective ties, as well. In Japan's case, this often occurs because of the articulation of concepts like rural, traditional, and heritage with nostalgic language, images, and ideas steeped in the discourse of *furusato* and the *Nihonjinron* project. Precarity is no less affectively engaging than nostalgia. Positive affects and negative ones do not remain in suspension like oil and water, separate and identifiable, touching but failing to interact. They mix into one another, stewing together until the negative becomes invisible, inextricable from the positive, pernicious and haunting. For every positive association with *Hanamatsuri* expressed to me by friends in Tōei, there accompanied the undercurrents of trepidation and uncertainty.

ICH's place on the international stage as a potential force for economic revitalization and a signpost for cultural trouble, only adds to the numerous circulations at play through the public's engagement with it. There is no easy way to account for additional affects, ideas, and conceptions attaching themselves to pieces of ICH through international visibility. The innumerable array of individuals, organizations, committees, and governments who help to define the ICH construct make up the heritagescape, and facilitate ICH's circulation. This heritagescape finds itself alongside other potential and existing "scapes," and its status as disjuncture locates it within the global flows that have come to constitute our current world.

Both *Hanamatsuri* and the village of Tōei exist as cases for this circulation of affect, for the creeping sensations of precarity. In a visit back, friends and acquaintances wondered how my studies were going, and continually expressed amazement that I had any interest in the town at all. Their surprise came not only from a perceived void of international interest, but also domestic.

With lack of age-appropriate participants forcing villages around them to put their festivals on hiatus, there appears little hope on the horizon. Continued out-migration, declining birth rates, and aging demographics steadily deplete the town's population. For many in Tōei, some form recognition for *Hanamatsuri* seems the best way to stave off economic and cultural decline, despite reservations. However, such recognition may only invite more problems for the town. But perhaps with the appropriate attention to the process of identifying, preserving, and curating ICH, along with revisions to its underlying colonial and orientalist structures, people can begin to mitigate the deleterious precariousness recognition might bring. ICH does not exist in a vacuum. It influences media, understandings of culture, perceptions of the rural, and the actions of people local and international. It is my hope that this paper has revealed bit more of the vast iceberg below the surface of intangible cultural heritage.

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